



## MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION STEERING COMMITTEE

4/28/2025 - Minutes

### CALL TO ORDER

The Transportation Steering Committee met on Monday, April 28, 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, Commissioner Michael Connelly, Mike Taylor, Dustin Gawrylow, Brenda Nagel and Melissa Nordsven. Members Brian Ritter and Jaelyn Chathams were absent.

### REGULAR AGENDA

#### A. Public Comment

Susan Dingle, public transportation advocate, would like the committee to recommend funds from the tax initiative go to the Bismar Transit operational deficit and also pay to have an additional 4 hours for fixed routes. Kyle Thiel, Rideable owner, proposed the committee provide funding for a 12-month, \$3.5 million pilot program called TEAM (Transportation Enhancement and Access Management). Mr. Thiel described the program as having five strategic investment areas.

1. Transportation Safety and Reliability Fund (\$250,000)
2. Community Voucher Program (\$1,000,000)
3. Strategic Marketing and Promotion (\$750,000)
4. Technology and Operations (\$1,250,000)
5. Measurement and Accountability (\$250,000)

#### B. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Member Kopp moved to approve minutes and Member Taylor seconded. Upon a roll call vote all aye M/C.

#### C. Discussion with City of Mandan Leadership

Mandan City Administrator, Jim Neubauer and Mandan City Planner, Andrew Stromme were present for the meeting.

City Administrator Neubauer described to the committee how the City of Mandan has begun to implement a process to evaluate proposals wishing to receive tax dollars dedicated for public transportation. Administrator Neubauer explained that the City of Mandan has developed a grant program and are currently receiving applications. Once the application deadline has been reached, a committee will evaluate the proposals and

present them to their City Commission. Administrator Nuebauer shared that there has been interest from the community to add fixed route services to the City of Mandan and that there is a desire from the City of Mandan for both communities to align and work together to find solutions to the public transportation gaps in both communities.

Commissioner Connelly invited stakeholders from the City of Mandan to attend the May 8th Community Conversations where public transportation will be discussed.

#### D. Expectations for Additional Services

Mayor Schmitz opened the topic to the Committee for discussion.

Member Gawrylow shared that he believed extending the hours of the existing services needs to be a priority. Member Vanette said that he believed holiday services should also be extended. Member Kopp expressed that she thought services on Sundays and holidays should be extended as well. Mayor Schmitz asked Bis-Man Transit Executive Director Deidre Hughes what the impact would be if hours were expanded during the week. Director Hughes explained that she believed increasing the fixed routes by four hours each day would cause about a 10% increase in cost and that it would be difficult to estimate the projected cost of extending weekend services due to the inconsistency of the number of rides that are requested, but she felt comfortable that it would cost about \$25,000 per month to expand weekend services.

Director Hughes asked the committee to consider whether weekend services would be for the general public. Member Vanett expressed concerns that if the ridership was open to the public that people with disabilities might lose priority. Commissioner Connelly suggested that maybe it would be necessary to create a priority hierarchy that aligned with the language of the Measure 1 ballot initiative. Member Gawrylow asked Director Hughes if smaller buses would be used for Sunday services open to the public. Director Hughes responded yes, that she thought smaller buses would be used for this service. Director Hughes explained that it would be difficult to know the financial impact if the service was open to the public and that it would probably need to be studied or tested for a period of time to get accurate information. Member Gawrylow asked Director Hughes if a million dollars would fund additional services on weekends and holidays. Director Hughes responded that she believed it would cover the cost of those services. Commissioner Connelly expressed concerns about finding drivers to provide weekend and holiday services and that maybe a voucher program should be considered.

Mayor Schmitz asked Director Hughes if she could explain or try to normalize the deficit as there are fluctuations from year to year. Director Hughes responded that it would probably equate to about \$500,000 a year. The committee discussed how much reserves they should plan to hold in the fund. Member Gawrylow suggested the reserve should not exceed a year's worth of sales tax proceeds. Mayor Schmitz shared that he would like to settle this discussion at a later date and at this point only take the previous meeting's motion of allocating up to \$1M to Bis-Man Transit to settle the 2025 operating deficit to the next City Commission Meeting on May 13th.

Member Kopp asked about the lifespan of the buses used for transit. Director Hughes responded that all vehicles are on a replacement plan and that the smaller buses are on a different schedule than the fixed route buses. Director Hughes also explained that they are sold after they have reached the end of their lifespan.

Mayor Schmitz asked Member Gawrylow what the average fee would be for a ride with Uber or Lyft. Member Gawrylow responded that the driver receives about 60% of the fare and that

it would cost a rider about \$20 to go from North Walmart to South Walmart.

Member Kopp asked what the schedule is for buses to be replaced? Director Hughes responded that fixed route buses are on an eleven-year schedule and that typically Bis-Man Transit replaces a paratransit bus every year. Member Nagel asked if prices were locked in for new vehicles. Director Hughes responded that paratransit buses are locked in but the fixed route buses are not. Director Hughes continued that it takes 8–10 weeks to receive quotes and Bis-Man Transit is anticipating increases in quotes.

**E. Other Business**

It was decided by the committee that the next meeting would be May 13, 2025, at 2:30 PM.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 1:04 PM.