

**BISMARCK-MANDAN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
POLICY BOARD MEETING
APRIL 15, 2025**

The Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Board met April 15, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. in the Tom Baker Meeting Room, City/County Building, 221 N 5th St, Bismarck, ND. Mike Schmitz presided.

Members present or participating via Zoom were Mike Schmitz, James Froelich, Keli Berglund, and Steve Schwab. Member absent was Andy Zachmeier.

Others present or attending via Zoom were Kim Riepl, Paulette Jacobsen, and Stephen Larson of the Bismarck-Mandan MPO; Luke Champa, SRF; and Will Hutchings, NDDOT.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schmitz called the April 15, 2025 meeting of the Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board to order.

MINUTES

Chair Schmitz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2025 Meeting.

MOTION: Ms. Berglund made a motion to approve the March minutes. Mr. Froelich seconded the motion and with James Froelich, Keli Berglund, Steve Schwab, and Chair Schmitz voting in favor, the motion was approved.

**ARRIVE 2050 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN (MTP)
AMENDMENT**

Ms. Riepl presented on Exhibit A, an amendment to the Arrive 2050 MTP. The Arrive 2050 MTP was adopted in December of 2024. The purpose of the amendment is to provide revised information for the Urban Regional Road Program funds (through changes to text and tables) and address numerous miscellaneous changes for accuracy and clarity throughout the document. Text and tables regarding Planning Emphasis Areas were removed, as they were rescinded via a Presidential Executive Order. The MPO advertised the amendment for a 15-day public comment period and held a public hearing at TAC, and no comments were received. The MPO also notified TAC and its state and federal oversight of the amendment. Oversight provided comment to indicate their concerns about the MTP have been addressed through this amendment. TAC recommended approval of the amendment as presented.

MOTION: Mr. Froelich made a motion to approve the Arrive 2050 MTP Amendment as presented. Ms. Berglund seconded the motion and with James Froelich, Keli Berglund, Steve Schwab, and Chair Schmitz voting in favor, the motion was approved.

2025 SAFETY POLICY STUDY

Mr. Champa presented an update for SRF. They held their second Steering Committee meeting and received a lot of good feedback. They took notes for their Literature and Policy Review concerning Access Management and Site Triangle policies, which they will update for the local jurisdictions as applicable. The Literature and Policy Review is intended to provide guidance and a framework for the study going forward. One example of this from national and state literature is the Vision Zero initiative. The Steering Committee had good discussion about this, and a Vision Zero statement and target will be included in the study. Setting a Vision Zero safety target is a requirement for the Safe Streets and Roads For All (SS4A) Grant Program. SRF is continuing with their data review and safety analysis. They have a working memo for this effort to document how they are using specific data to support this project. They are in the middle of their safety analysis and expect to have more updates on that analysis soon.

SRF's subconsultant, Emergent Strategies Group, is scheduling focus group meetings, targeting May 1. There are also two Pop-Up events for the study called Community Conversations which will be held at the Earth Day Festival in Bismarck on April 29, and the Touch-A-Truck event in Mandan on May 17. The idea is to engage people about transportation safety and get feedback on specific areas where they have safety concerns.

2025 ITS RA

Ms. Riepl provided 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). The update began in February and a series of small group stakeholder meetings were held in March. Some of the feedback from these meetings is still being processed and additional feedback is being sought from stakeholders who could not attend the March meetings (including the City of Lincoln Police and Public Works Departments). There is a meeting on April 17 with representatives from Engineering, IT, and Public Works departments to identify IT issues related to both the traffic and the maintenance service areas. Cybersecurity measures can create access barriers, so the MPO wants to stay ahead of these issues. By May, the MPO anticipates being able to share insights gathered from the different use centers (Emergency, Traffic, Maintenance, Transit, and IT).

2025 MONITORING REPORT UPDATE

Mr. Larson presented. The MPO finalized its contract with HDR, the selected consultant for this project, on March 21. A kickoff meeting was held on March 31, and Mr. Larson will be meeting with the consultant regularly going forward. The project team will be reviewing the MPO's existing Monitoring Report documents for data and content and will hold a stakeholder workshop sometime in May with jurisdictional planners and engineers to better understand their data and performance measure needs. The contracted completion date for the project is December 31. Mr. Larson indicated regular updates will be provided to the boards as the project proceeds, although these updates may not occur every month.

2024 CONSOLIDATED PLANNING GRANT (CPG) REDISTRIBUTION UPDATE

Ms. Riepl presented. This was discussed briefly last month. At the MPO Directors Meeting in February NDDOT rolled out a process for redistributing unspent CPG funds. The CPG is the federal grant that provides the 80% federal share of the MPO's annual work program. Each year NDDOT will provide the cumulative total of unspent CPG funds from the previous year to the North Dakota MPOs, and the MPO directors will have two weeks to recommend how those funds should be redistributed in the following fiscal year. The MPOs were able to recommend a redistribution for unspent 2024 CPG funds to NDDOT on March 6, and NDDOT just provided an estimate to the Bismack-Mandan MPO of its 2026 CPG balance, including the redistributed 2024 funds. The MPO will receive an estimated \$799,699 in federal funds in 2026. This allows the MPO to move forward with its budgeting and programming exercises. The MPO has begun work on its 2026-2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and met with its jurisdictions on April 14 to begin identifying priorities for transportation studies and data purchases over the next several years.

BIS-MAN TRANSIT UPDATE

Ms. Hughes presented. Transit celebrated its 20-year CAT anniversary in May of 2024 with two free-ride weekends. It was very successful, they had 831 trips the first weekend and 914 trips the second weekend, which at that time were the biggest CAT weekends since pre-COVID. Transit switched to Brightline Insurance from North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund (NDIRF). They had some issues getting NDIRF to cover them up to the City of Bismarck's required level and so were having to pay for an umbrella policy to make up the difference. Brightline is utilized by several non-profit transit agencies in South Dakota and had great reviews. Bis-Man Transit is saving about \$90,000 annually with them. Transit did a lot of community outreach in 2024, including the Community Fairs at University of Mary and United Tribes Technical College, Touch-a-Truck, the New American Job Fair, the YMCA National Senior Health and Fitness Vendor Showcase, Train-the-Trainer with Cloverdale Foods, CAT bus onboard training with Global Neighbors, paratransit training for Missouri Valley Slope and BPS Life Education, and presentations and training at the United Way Homeless Shelter. Transit received funding through the ND Council for Developmental Disabilities to put on an introduction to CAT and paratransit training. There was not a lot of interest, but the training was recorded and can be used in the future. Transit extended its paratransit service contract with the City of Lincoln.

Bis-Man Transit has benefited from advertising revenue. They took advertising in-house in 2020 and can keep all their advertising revenues as a result. They exceeded their advertising goals for 2024 and made \$123,953. They have also had opportunity to invest in CDs and generated \$280,930 in interest in 2024. They offered free rides for election days in 2024. They provided 466 CAT trips and 303 paratransit trips on June 11, and on November 5 they provided 562 CAT trips and 358 paratransit trips. Transit received 4 new paratransit buses and 2 new vans in 2024. The buses were fleet replacements, along with one of the vans. The other van was an addition to the fleet. They held their sixth annual Stuff-the-Bus drive in December and collected over 700 items for Ministry on the Margins.

For 2024, CAT ridership ended at 121,538 trips (a 20.89% increase from 2023). This is a significant increase that is very unusual without revenue or service area changes. Paratransit ridership was 90,237, a 2.8% increase from 2023. The Black Route was the top performing route, and the Orange Route was second. At-fault accidents went down from 19 in 2023 to 14 in 2024.

Measure 1 passed in Bismarck and Mandan and will bring sales tax dollars for Public Transit, hopefully providing Bis-Man Transit the opportunity to address its budget deficit and improve its service. Transit just completed its fifth consecutive clean audit, which is a great accomplishment for a small staff. Senate Bill 2254 is now law (the Urban Transit Directors in North Dakota advocated in favor). It designates \$2 million to NDDOT to provide grants to fixed-route public transportation providers for associated paratransit services for the biennium of 2025-2027 (Bis-Man Transit would likely receive around \$190,000). It is a one-time funding item and includes funding for a fixed-route service study. Transit will be receiving rewards from NDDOT for its SFY2026 5339 and 5310 grant applications. All the projects Transit applied for will be funded. This includes 50% funding for the operations grants, 80% of its Mobility Manager salary, and funding for bus replacements (both paratransit and fixed-route buses). They have also received funding to order Fat-Tire Bike Racks for all CAT buses in the next month or so.

Mr. Schwab requested a summary of the information Ms. Hughes provided, and she indicated she will work with the MPO to get that out to the board.

OTHER BUSINESS

Bicycle Friendly Community Workshop

Ms. Riepl reminded the board the MPO is hosting a free Bicycle Friendly Community Workshop on May 21-22 (it is a one and one-half day event). It will start the morning of May 21 and there will be a bike audit that afternoon. Attendance at the entire workshop is not required. Ms. Riepl encouraged anyone interested to register before May 14.

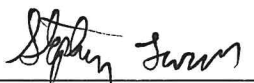
MPO Transportation Planner Opening

Ms. Riepl said the MPO received 30 applications for the open Transportation Planner position and the two-tiered interview process was concluded last week. She is pleased to announce Stephen Larson has accepted the offer to be the MPO's next Transportation Planner. She congratulated him on his new position. He will be maintaining his Transportation Specialist responsibilities until his position can be filled.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Schmitz adjourned at 1:59 p.m. The next scheduled meeting will take place May 20, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. in the Tom Baker Meeting Room the City/County Building, 221 N 5th St, Bismarck.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephen Larson
Recording Secretary

APPROVED:

MPO Policy Board Chair