

**BISMARCK-MANDAN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
POLICY BOARD MEETING
SEPTEMBER 16, 2025**

The Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Board met September 16, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. in the Ed “Bosh” Froehlich Meeting Room, City Hall, 205 2nd Ave NW, Mandan, ND. Mike Schmitz presided.

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

Others present or attending via Zoom were Kim Riepl, Paulette Jacobsen, and Stephen Larson of the Bismarck-Mandan MPO; Luke Champa, SRF; Sharijad Hasan, NDDOT-ATAC; and Deidre Hughes, Bis-Man Transit.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schmitz called the September 16, 2025, meeting of the Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board to order.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Schmitz called for public comments on items on the current agenda or the prior Policy Board meeting agenda, excluding public hearing items. Seeing and hearing none, he closed the public comment period.

MINUTES

Chair Schmitz called for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2025, meeting.

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

DRAFT 2026-2029 TIP

Mr. Larson stated the MPO has developed its draft 2026-2029 TIP, showing federally funded projects in the region scheduled over the next four fiscal years and including other relevant information about transportation funding in the MPO area. The MPO makes a practice of updating the TIP each year.

There were no major textual updates to this year’s TIP, but the draft contains the usual updates to references, years, projects, and maps. All sections have been updated to reflect current projects and funding amounts for the MPO area and Bis-Man Transit. North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) has not yet provided updated numbers for their portion of Operations and Maintenance or for the Project Phase Cost Estimates. This information will be added to the TIP when available.

The MPO advertised the draft TIP for the required 15-day public comment period, and received four public comments, as well as comments from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Mr. Larson summarized these comments. First, there were two comments from a member of the public. One of these comments mentions that the road

surface in the area around the State Capitol (due to the construction of the new North Dakota State Laboratory building) has been very challenging for users of Bis-Man Transit's Black Bus Route, and she is hopeful this will be repaired. Her other comment suggests there should be reduced taxi fares available during early and late hours when Transit's service is not available. The State Historical Society also provided a comment reminding the MPO of their review process for roadway projects under North Dakota law. The MPO also received a comment from the Department of Water Resources reminding us of their permitting processes and the local floodplain.

Finally, FHWA and FTA provided comments on the draft document. Mr. Larson is working on addressing these comments. Some will require minor textual changes, and others simply will require clarification. There will be a minor change made to the TIP amendment process, removing the requirement for amendments to be performed when a project change negatively impacts air quality or environmental justice areas, since it is not clear how this amendment threshold could be tracked.

TAC provided some minor comments and corrections at their meeting yesterday, and recommended approval of the draft document with their corrections incorporated.

None of the changes resulting from public or TAC comments will be substantial enough to require an additional public comment period. All comments received will be incorporated into the final TIP document, and once Mr. Larson has completed all necessary changes, the TIP will be brought back to TAC and Policy Board for possible adoption in October.

Mr. Larson presented the 2026 Program of Projects.

Mr. Larson presented the 2027 Program of Projects.

Mr. Larson presented the 2028 Program of Projects.

Ms. Berglund asked about 28.6.01 and what kind of intersection lighting is being installed. Ms. Riepl indicated it was street lighting, not traffic signals.

Mr. Larson presented the 2029 Program of Projects.

Mr. Froelich asked for more information about project 29.6.02. Mr. Larson said he will reach out to NDDOT for more details on the work being performed.

Mr. Larson presented the project maps at the end of the TIP document and reiterated that the MPO is looking for a recommendation of approval for the draft TIP, so that the final TIP can be brought back to the boards in October.

MOTION: Ms. Berglund made a motion to approve the draft 2026-2029 TIP as presented. Mr. Froelich seconded the motion and with Mr. Froelich, Ms. Berglund and Chair Schmitz voting in favor, the motion was approved.

FARMP (FRINGE AREA ROAD MASTER PLAN)

Mr. Larson stated the MPO held interviews for the Fringe Area Road Master Plan update on September 4th, 9th, and 10th. Four firms were interviewed, KLJ, SRF, Bolton & Menk, and HDR. The Selection Committee consisted of representatives from all five MPO jurisdictions, and Mr. Larson served as moderator. The voting was close, but the Selection Committee promoted Bolton & Menk as the preferred consultant for this project. Mr. Larson indicated he enjoyed the interview process, and the consultants made the choice difficult. The MPO is requesting approval of Bolton & Menk and permission to pursue contract negotiations. The MPO would execute the contract after legal and NDDOT review. Mr. Larson showed a copy of the QBS Letter to the board, provided for informational purposes. It certifies the MPO complied with NDDOT's Qualifications Based Selection (QBS)

requirements for the consultant selection process, and a copy will be signed by the Policy Board Chair. TAC recommended approval at their meeting yesterday.

MOTION: Mr. Froelich made a motion to approve Bolton & Menk as the FARMP consultant as presented. Ms. Berglund seconded the motion with Mr. Froelich, Ms. Berglund and Chair Schmitz voting in favor, the motion was approved.

2025 SAFETY POLICY STUDY

Mr. Champa presented an update for SRF. They will hold their next Steering Committee meeting next week. At the meeting they will provide an update on public engagement (they have held several stakeholder meetings recently) and there will be discussion about the leadership commitment and goal setting portion of the plan, the safety analysis results, and the high injury network (specifically looking at preliminary network characteristics and potential crash profiles). Mr. Champa expects most of next week's meeting to be devoted to looking at SRF's comprehensive list of countermeasures and safety strategies. The goal is to organize these strategies so recommendations can be made based on roadway types and other important factors. A draft report for the study is expected by early November.

2025 ITS RA

Mr. Hasan stated he has made significant progress on the ITS Regional Architecture update. All ITS elements in the region and the ITS service packages being provided by the regional stakeholders have been updated. He noted the exhibit he provided contains a couple of errors, the Emergency Response service package will be listed as existing, not future, and the Transit Signal Priority service package is going to be removed after discussions with Bis-Man Transit. The service areas covered in the ITS RA include Emergency Service, Maintenance, Traffic Service, Transit Service, and Communication Service. ATAC and the MPO met with stakeholders for each of these service areas, and each area has service packages. Existing packages refer to ITS elements currently being utilized by the stakeholders, planned packages refer to ITS elements they intend to implement, and future packages refer to elements they may potentially implement.

Mr. Hasan is preparing user needs for each service package in the ITS RA update and attaching functional requirements to each ITS element and stakeholder. He touched on the Communication Service area and noted that there is a service area where ATAC and the stakeholders have identified challenges, specifically with data sharing. Exchanging transportation data between agencies has proven difficult, due primarily to cybersecurity requirements coming from the North Dakota IT Department. Cybersecurity is certainly important, however ATAC and the stakeholders for this update are looking into ways of overcoming the data sharing challenge while maintaining data security.

ATAC will include a couple of ITS projects in the final update (26.1.02 and 26.6.11, an RRFB project and an ITS maintenance project) that are in the draft TIP.

2025 MONITORING REPORT UPDATE

The MPO and HDR are continuing to work on the draft Monitoring Report document and have made good progress. Mr. Larson will be reviewing the first draft this week and will work on editing and finalization over the next few weeks.

TIP ADMINISTRATIVE MODIFICATIONS

Mr. Larson stated this month, the MPO processed six administrative modifications to the 2025-2028 TIP. Last month, at NDDOT's request, the MPO moved twelve projects, six from FY 2027 and six from FY 2026, into FY 2025, in case additional FY25 funding came available to NDDOT because of the August redistribution at the end of the current federal fiscal year. The MPO recently received word that the six projects moved from FY 2027 are going back into 2027. These include an Urban Grants project in downtown Bismarck, one microsurfacing project in Bismarck, three concrete pavement repair projects in Bismarck, and one mill and overlay project in Mandan. The details of these projects are included in the packet.

BIG SKY RAIL/ GOVERNMENT PARTNER PROGRAM

Ms. Riepl said the MPO has been a member of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) Government Partners Program (GPP) since late last year. BSPRA just held its fourth annual conference September 8-10 in Livingston Montana, and Ms. Riepl attended. The conference is one of the benefits of GPP membership. BSPRA continues to lead the effort, through the Corridor ID Program, to reinstate the former North Coast Hiawatha passenger rail line that formerly ran from Seattle to Chicago (passing through Bismarck-Mandan). BSPRA is in stage II of this effort, including the development of a comprehensive service development plan (determining service times, station locations, and other important items). The MPO is excited about the return of passenger rail service and has provided funding in its 2026-2027 UPWP for a passenger rail station siting study. The timing of this study is on track. The study will conclude in mid-2027, when BSPRA will be in the middle of their service development plan. BSPRA indicated they will not be looking closely at passenger rail stations until late 2027.

The conference went over the benefits of returning passenger rail service can bring, including health care access, reducing isolation for residents without reliable transportation, and economic development, tourism, and growth opportunities. There was a representative at the conference who was instrumental in the Mardi Gras line, a Tri-State passenger rail initiative that recently began service in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi, running between New Orleans and Mobile. Two of the three state DOTs provided funding for the service but Alabama's DOT did not, Mobile Alabama ended up providing the local match for the project. It has only been in service for the past month, and has already served over 10,000 riders, far exceeding expectations. There was another representative, John Robert Smith, who is a renowned advocate for passenger rail. He was the Mayor of Meridian, Mississippi when passenger rail service returned to the area, the service brought significant benefits to their community. They revitalized their historical train depot into a multi-modal transportation hub, serving passenger rail, freight rail, public transportation, and other multi-modal options. This success story was compared to a similar success story about the revitalization of Union Station in Denver, Colorado.

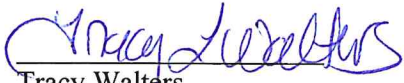
The conference emphasized contacting our congressional representatives to let them know about the desire for passenger rail service. The BSPRA website (www.bigskyrail.org) has a link where you can easily do this on their conference page. It is also important to form multi-state cooperative agreements and other regional alliances. Being a GPP member is an important part of this effort. Another note from the conference is although stations are important, getting the trains for the route is even more important.

Ms. Riepl's takeaway from the conference is we need to keep planning, we are moving in the right direction, this kind of effort takes time and momentum. BSPRA is still hoping to have passenger rail service restored to the Bismarck-Mandan area by 2032.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Schmitz adjourned at 2:12 p.m. The next scheduled meeting will take place on October 21, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. in the Ed "Bosh" Froelich Meeting Room of Mandan City Hall, 205 2nd Ave NW, Mandan.

Respectfully submitted,


Tracy Walters
Recording Secretary

APPROVED:

MPO Policy Board Chair