

**BISMARCK-MANDAN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
POLICY BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 17, 2026**

The Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Board met February 17, 2026, at 1:30 p.m. in the Tom Baker Meeting Room, City/County Building, 221 N 5th St, Bismarck, ND. Chair Schmitz presided.

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

Others present or attending via Zoom included Kim Riepl, Tracy Walters and Paulette Jacobsen of the Bismarck-Mandan MPO; Deidre Hughes, Bis-Man Transit; Joel Mann, Bolten and Menk; and Will Hutchings, NDDOT.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schmitz called the February 17, 2026, meeting of the Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board to order.

CONSENT AGENDA

Chair Schmitz called for a motion to approve the items on the Consent Agenda.

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

Secretary's Note: Mr. Bakken joined the meeting after the Consent Agenda items were approved.

2026-2029 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) AMENDMENT

Ms. Riepl stated this month, the MPO processed an amendment to the 2026-2029 TIP. The amendment was advertised for the required 15-day public comment period and no comments have been received. The public hearing will be held on Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. in the David Blackstead room on the 2nd floor of the City/County Office Building. The amendment increases the cost estimates for a project for microsurfacing on ND 810 from the Memorial Highway Interchange to the Expressway Bridge. The cost for this project will be increased from \$196,000.00 to \$256,098.00. Staff is seeking a motion to approve contingent on no substantive public comments received at the public hearing. TAC recommended conditional approval of the 2026-2029 TIP Amendment.

MOTION: Mr. Bakken made a motion to approve the 2026-2029 TIP Amendment contingent on no public comments received at the public hearing. Mr. Froelich seconded the motion and with Mr. Froelich, Ms. Berglund, Mr. Bakken and Chair Schmitz voting in favor, the motion was approved.

2026 TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN (TDP) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Ms. Jacobsen stated the 2026 Transit Development Plan (TDP) Request for Proposals (RFP) was presented to TAC in October 2025. TAC recommended approval of the TDP RFP and Policy Board voted to delay the TDP RFP approximately three months pending service changes that were being implemented by Bis-Man Transit. The service changes are now anticipated to occur on April 1, 2026. The RFP has been revised to include date changes to the project schedule

and the scope of work has been further refined. The TDP is approximately an eighteen-month study with a budget of \$180,000.00 and Bis-Man Transit will provide a local match amount of \$36,000.00. The study will begin in 2026 and conclude before the end of 2027 as indicated in the 2026-2027 UPWP.

Ms. Jacobsen gave an overview of the revisions to the 2026 TDP RFP.

Ms. Jacobsen stated the Bismarck-Mandan MPO believes the revised TDP RFP aligns with the best interests of the Bis-Man Transit and the MPO's jurisdictions that are likely to be impacted by recommendations resulting from the plan. She noted that staff members and TAC recommend approval of the TDP RFP.

Mr. Schmitz stated that he met with the MPO and requested the RFP study focus on targeted items such as if there are enough routes, if a circulator route is needed, and if we need to add additional hubs. Mr. Schmitz noted he is more comfortable now proceeding with the TDP RFP than he was three months ago. He added that his request is to have the MPO periodically update TAC, Policy Board, Bismarck City Commission, and Mandan City Commission at their meetings, as a reporting system for updates regarding changes to the TDP in Bismarck and Mandan as a result of the study in process.

Mr. Froelich asked if it was possible for the MPO to periodically update TAC, Policy Board, Bismarck City Commission, and Mandan City Commission.

Ms. Jacobsen stated that yes, it was previously discussed among staff to provide updates to TAC, Policy Board, Bismarck City Commission and Mandan City Commission, and extend invitations to public comment hearings as well.

MOTION: Mr. Froelich made a motion to approve the 2026 Transit Development Plan (TDP) RFP. Ms. Berglund seconded the motion and with Mr. Froelich, Ms. Berglund, Mr. Bakken and Chair Schmitz voting in favor, the motion was approved.

BISMARCK-MANDAN MPO BY-LAWS

Ms. Riepl stated last month it was brought up to the Policy Board that the MPO was preparing changes to the By-Laws and to bring them up to date.

Ms. Riepl gave an overview of the changes to the By-Laws of the Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Ms. Riepl stated last month TAC experienced audio technical difficulties and they were not able to obtain audible votes to obtain a meeting quorum. This prompted a discussion among the TAC members to change the By-Laws pertaining to the quorum requirements and review the By-Laws for other necessary changes. Ms. Riepl noted that TAC recommended adoption of the Bismarck-Mandan MPO By-Laws.

Ms. Berglund asked if the next update for the By-Laws could list the Lincoln City Engineer as their representative.

Ms. Riepl stated at the request of Ms. Berglund; we could update the City of Lincoln's representative to be the Lincoln City Engineer.

MOTION: Mr. Froelich made a motion to adopt the Bismarck-Mandan MPO By-Laws. Mr. Bakken seconded the motion and with Mr. Froelich, Ms. Berglund, Mr. Bakken and Chair Schmitz voting in favor, the motion was approved.

***Secretary's Note:** Chair Schmitz noted that he had missed the Public Comment section in the beginning of the meeting and called for Public Comment at this time.*

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.

2025 FRINGE AREA ROAD MASTER PLAN (FARMP) UPDATE

Mr. Mann stated the Fringe Area Roads Master Plan (FARMP) consultant team is working with the Advanced Traffic Analysis Center (ATAC) on traffic and roadway operations elements of the technical analysis. He noted that the MPO member jurisdictions are open to a streamlined way of documenting amendments to the FARMP. He said there is no need for extra reporting on small amendments and that local governments could approve the development with basic guidelines. Mr. Mann stated the MPO has noted some corridors, such as the Beltway and the hotspot locations, may require a different level of analysis and assessment. Future development of the region suggests a need for additional transportation infrastructure to serve a regional mobility function. Mr. Mann noted that the FARMP update would be a hybrid of a major corridors plan and a framework for building out a road network as development continues. The focus on the plan would identify critical connections and corridors with regional significance and streamline a review process.

Mr. Mann stated TAC and Policy Board may be involved in making decisions on regionally significant corridors and connections. He also noted that NDDOT could possibly also take a lead on certain projects pertaining to the FARMP as well. Any non-critical corridors could be built according to guidance of the FARMP and the plan will include specific details on how non-critical roads and critical roads interface with one another and the essential components.

Mr. Mann stated that Stakeholder work sessions would focus on specifics of the network and bring user perspectives to the planning effort to allow critical corridors to be defined. This would include focused conversations with a smaller set of stakeholders directly involved in fringe area development. A pair of extensive design workshops addressing Mandan and Morton County, and the other addressing Bismarck, Lincoln and Burleigh County will focus on potential key corridors and hotspots. They will also host a workshop for NDDOT to address key planning and project development. He noted the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber EDC has reached out to facilitate public outreach and involve the public and he will update the Boards on this effort as it plays out.

Mr. Schmitz asked Mr. Mann to look at the invoice in exhibit R-E. He noted the billing indicates it is for the Bismarck-Mandan Safe Routes Services project and asked him if he could correct the invoice.

Mr. Mann replied he would be happy to take a look and make the change to the invoice.

BIG SKY PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY (BSPRA) UPDATE

Ms. Riepl stated TAC and Policy Board approved the Government Partners Program (GPP) of the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) 2026 membership and signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) at the December meetings. BSPRA Board meetings occur every other month and the first meeting of the year occurred on January 14, 2026. At their meeting, they had an election of officers which reinstated the current Board members. The Board members were asked to state their personal goals and three of them stated that extended outreach to North Dakota, including the Bismarck-Mandan area was a priority. Ms. Riepl stated she has received correspondence from BSPRA regarding scheduling meetings and engaging in public forums. Representatives from BSPRA are planning to visit the north coast corridor communities in North Dakota, including the Bismarck-Mandan area, later this spring. Their desire is to coordinate with BMMPO and the jurisdictional teams. She noted the next BSPRA Board meeting will be held in March and encouraged the Policy Board Members to attend remotely.

Ms. Riepl stated it was suggested to her, to facilitate a round table discussion meeting with Principals from the BMMPO and the jurisdictions and other surrounding communities such

as Valley City, Jamestown, Dickinson, and Beach, ND. She asked the Board members for their feedback and direction regarding scheduling the meeting.

Ms. Riepl stated she was looking for Board approval as the meeting invite list request is outside of BMMPO's focal area.

Ms. Riepl reminded the Board that BSPRA has a corridor ID project underway. BSPRA stated they have fully completed Phase I and are moving on to Phase II of the plan, which is the Service Development Plan. The Federal Railroad Administration has enacted changes that may lighten some of the requirements. She stated she would be looking forward to hearing additional information pertaining to the progress of the Service Development Plan.

Mr. Schmitz stated that Ms. Riepl had consensus of the Board to invite the jurisdictions along the path to partake in a round table meeting to discuss the BSPRA.

2025 BIS-MAN TRANSIT STATE OF TRANSIT UPDATE

Ms. Hughes with Bis-Man Transit stated per Bismarck City Commission (BCC) approval, effective April 1, 2026, Bis-Man Transit will be proceeding with the Service Hour Expansion. This will increase the operating hours by four additional hours daily affecting both the Fixed Route and Demand Response Services. She noted Bis-Man Transit will be open from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Monday–Friday for the Fixed Route and 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Saturday. She said they hope to see an increase in ridership immediately; however, significant adjustments can take six to twelve months to see changes.

Ms. Hughes stated the proposed changes for the Demand Response Service on Sundays were also approved by the BCC. She noted the new hours of operation for Paratransit services will be 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Sundays beginning April 1, 2026. For the first time, citizens will be able to utilize Public Transit on Sundays and Holidays, as Bis-Man Transit has not offered services on these days in the past.

Ms. Hughes stated the general public will also be invited to utilize the Demand Response Service on holidays. Both of these services will be operated separately so Paratransit certified riders will be on separate buses than the general public. This will allow Bis-Man Transit to monitor how effective the service is and whether they will need to make adjustments in the future. Scheduling for the Demand Response Service and Paratransit can be done up to fourteen days in advance; but must be scheduled at least one day in advance and the cost will be \$3.00 per ride.

Ms. Hughes stated that Bis-Man Transit has also entered into contract negotiations with WeDriveU. If the contract is approved, WeDriveU will be reducing their hourly rate and accepting our three additional contract years. This contract will be presented to the Board of Directors next week.

Ms. Hughes stated Bis-Man Transit needs six new CDL drivers to cover the expanded service hours. She noted that four drivers are currently pending background checks for possible hire with Bis-Man Transit. She also noted that they are in the process of updating our website rider guides and working on promotional materials for the service changes. In March, Bis-Man Transit will be pushing on social media and traditional media to promote the service changes.

Ms. Hughes stated Bis-Man Transit has several upcoming projects including our national transit database reporting, an audit and procurement projects that include a number of facility maintenance items. She noted they received one replacement paratransit vehicle that was totaled due to a not-at-fault accident and that Bis-Man Transit also has four replacement paratransit buses on order to replace vehicles that have reached the end of their useful life.

Ms. Hughes stated Bis-Man Transit has not received the FY 2026 5307 apportionments yet and they are looking forward to receiving this soon. She noted a few CDs coming due this month that might not be able to be reinvested until we know what the actual dollar amount is from the apportionment.

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Schmitz adjourned at 1:51 p.m. The next scheduled meeting will take place March 17, 2026, at 1:30 p.m. in the Tom Baker Meeting Room, City/County Building, 221 N 5th St, Bismarck.

Respectfully submitted,


Tracy Walters
Recording Secretary

APPROVED:

MPO Policy Board Chair