

BISMARCK-MANDAN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
POLICY BOARD MEETING
APRIL 21, 2026

The Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Board met April 21, 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. The member absent was Andy Zachmeier.

Others present or attending via Zoom included Kim Riepl, Stephen Larson, Tracy Walters and Paulette Jacobsen of the Bismarck-Mandan MPO; Deidre Hughes, Bis-Man Transit; Dave Mayer, Bismarck Parks and Rec; and Will Hutchings, NDDOT.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schmitz called the April 21, 2026, 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.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

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

FY 2027 RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM (RTP) APPLICATIONS

Mr. Larson stated that North Dakota Parks and Recreation District (NDPRD) recently solicited for the FY 2027 Recreational Trails Program (RTP). They opened their solicitation on April 1 and accepted applications through April 13. Applications for projects within the MPO area require an MPO letter of support, which may be provided after the application window closes. Assuming TAC and Policy Board approve of the applications, the MPO will provide letters to the applicants for submittal to the NDPRD. For this year's solicitation, the MPO received one application for Bismarck Cottonwood Park South Trail Connections Project. This project is consistent with the MPO's current MTP. The MPO does not prioritize RTP projects but is asked to review and support.

The Bismarck Parks and Recreation District BPRD is applying for a rehabilitation of shared-use trail connections within the southern portion of Cottonwood Park. The proposed project includes 5,901 linear feet of 10-foot-wide shared-use trail that is currently aged and cracking, including 176 linear feet of trail that needs to be removed or replaced. The project is located within one of Bismarck's most popular parks and includes trail sections that provide accessible routes to the ADA fishing pier at Cottonwood Pond, connection to Hidden Star Park

and neighborhoods west of the park, and links to sports fields, playgrounds, and spectator areas. The total cost is \$312,500, with a requested federal share of \$250,000.

Ms. Berglund asked about the second project listed in the packet.

Mr. Larson requested that the Board disregard the second project as it was from last year and should have been deleted from the list.

MOTION: Mr. Bakken made a motion to approve the FY 2027 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Applications. Mr. Froelich seconded the motion and with Ms. Berglund, Mr. Froelich, Mr. Bakken and Chair Schmitz voting in favor, the motion was approved.

BISMARCK FUNCTIONAL CLASS CHANGE REQUESTS

Mr. Larson stated functional class changes have historically been processed every ten years by the MPO after the adoption of a new urbanized area boundary and after every decennial census. He noted that the MPO is moving towards a more effective system which addresses Functional Class issues as they come up. The City of Bismarck completed the extension of East Century Avenue and 52nd Street from East Century Ave to 43rd Ave and he provided a reference map of the area. With the completion of these roads, the City of Bismarck has requested that these roads be functionally classified since they connect to an existing arterial on Century Ave and an arterial on 43rd Street. Mr. Larson stated that he has received comments from the City of Bismarck and Burleigh County addressing potential issues that they would like to address before proceeding with this request. He noted that TAC recommended that this request be continued to the May TAC and Policy Board meetings.

Mr. Schmitz noted that he is glad to hear that Burleigh County and the City of Bismarck are participating in discussions to solve this matter. He asked if we are looking for a motion to continue the item to the May meeting.

Mr. Larson stated they are looking for a motion from the Board to continue this item to the May meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Froelich made a motion to continue the Bismarck Functional Class Change Requests to the May meeting. Ms. Berglund seconded the motion and with Ms. Berglund, Mr. Froelich, Mr. Bakken and Chair Schmitz voting in favor, the motion was approved.

2026 TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN (TDP) CONSULTANT SELECTION

Ms. Jacobsen stated the MPO held interviews for the Transit Development Plan (TDP) update on April 13, 2026. The three firms that were interviewed included Bolton and Menk, Houston Engineering, and SRF. The selection committee consisted of representatives from Bis-Man Transit, City of Bismarck, City of Lincoln, and City of Mandan. Ms. Jacobsen stated she served as a moderator for the interviews. She noted that all of the consultants did an excellent job putting together proposals for the project. The selection committee has promoted Bolton and Menk as the preferred consultant for the TDP. The MPO is requesting approval of the selection for Bolton and Menk as the consultant for the project and permission to pursue contract negotiations. The MPO will execute the contract after legal and NDDOT review. The QBS letter certifies that the MPO has complied with NDDOT's qualification-based selection requirements for the consultant selection process and upon Board approval, will be signed by the Policy Board Chair after the meeting. She noted that TAC has recommended approval of Bolton and Menk as the selected consultant.

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

2026 PASSENGER RAIL STUDY RFP

Ms. Riepl stated the objective of this project is to identify and evaluate passenger train station corridors and potential site locations for a new passenger rail service station or stations and platforms to serve the MPO area. She stated the study aims to determine whether a single station or multiple stations would best serve the MPO area and where the preferred potential rail station or platform locations rank, based on a matrix developed using the evaluative criteria established through the study. This study will be approximately twelve months starting in July 2026 and concluding in July 2027. The budget for the study will not exceed \$225,000.00 and all five MPO jurisdictions are indicated in the 2026-2027 UPWP as partners. The study area will include the BNSF rail corridor in the MPO planning area that extends from the westernmost boundary of the MPO in Morton County to the MPO's easternmost boundary in Burleigh County. She noted the RFP was developed and provided to the jurisdictional representatives for review and comments and all comments have been addressed. If the RFP is approved, the MPO expects to have this posted on the North Dakota website by Friday, April 24, 2026, with a proposal deadline of Friday, May 15, 2026. The consultant interviews would occur the week of June 8th through June 11th and the consultant approval would happen at the June TAC and Policy Board meetings.

Ms. Riepl stated comments have been received and minor changes have been made to the RFP. She provided an overview of five significant changes to the RFP.

- The Burleigh County logo has been updated.
- The Content of Proposals section was updated to clarify SF-330 form requirements.
- The Local Existing Conditions section has been modified to include restructuring of where the description of the rail line and historic depot in Mandan occurs.
- The Study Area map was replaced with an updated version eliminating ETA references and the map's name has been changed.
- The Schedule for Contract Development and Final Project Deadline has been modified to indicate a potential presentation to NDDOT in May 2027.

Ms. Riepl noted the RFP contains standard language and format included with standard RFPs. She stated that a requirement to the Draft and Final Report section was added which addresses website content accessibility and provides a link to ensure conformance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) requirements. Documents will require an accessibility check report from a tool such as PAC 2026, Adobe Acrobat's built in checker, or similar tool.

Ms. Riepl stated there will be two rounds of public engagement in both Burleigh and Morton County. This study will also coincide with outreach that is being conducted by Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in relation to their corridor ID project. She noted that the MPO understands that it is imperative to keep our local leaders and elected officials informed with study activities and rail related developments. She stated that TAC recommended approval of the Passenger Rail Study RFP at their meeting with the changes as presented.

MOTION: Mr. Bakken made a motion to approve the 2026 Passenger Rail Study RFP with the changes as presented. Mr. Froelich seconded the motion and with Ms. Berglund, Mr. Froelich, Mr. Bakken and Chair Schmitz voting in favor, the motion was approved.

BASICS ACT LETTER OF SUPPORT

Ms. Riepl stated on February 9, 2026, a bipartisan bill was introduced to the US House of Representatives and it was for reauthorization legislation for surface transportation. She noted that the MPO Executive Directors in ND engaged in collaboration to draft a letter of support for the BASICS Act. The Executive Directors had a chance to discuss the BASICS Act and they have agreed to develop a different approach to their letter of support. Many of the provisions are beneficial in terms of how they are stated in the bill, however; it is hard to determine how they will impact the MPOs directly at a local or regional level. She noted that the MPOs are different in composition, especially Fargo-Moorhead Metro Cog being a TMA due to the fact their population exceeds two-hundred thousand. The MPO Executive Directors have determined that they would like to offer support in an outcome-based approach rather than for specific provisions within the bill. Ms. Riepl proposed that the four ND MPO Executive Directors be granted more time to determine the composition of the letter of support. She is seeking a motion to recommend that the BASICS Act letter of support be continued to the May TAC and Policy Board meetings. She noted that TAC has recommended the BASICS Act letter of support be continued to the May meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Froelich made a motion to continue the BASICS Act letter of support to the May meeting. Ms. Berglund seconded the motion and with Ms. Berglund, Mr. Froelich, Mr. Bakken and Chair Schmitz voting in favor, the motion was approved.

2026 FRINGE AREA ROAD MASTER PLAN (FARMP) UPDATE

Mr. Larson stated the Bismarck-Mandan MPO is currently planning to hold its next round of public engagement activities in early May 2026. The public engagement meetings will include interactive exercises that will share the draft plan process and allow participants to engage in the planning process. He noted that the Travel Demand Modeling (TDM) with ATAC is nearly concluded and the FARMP planning team will begin to address tradeoffs and treatments for the hotspots that were identified in the RFP.

Mr. Larson stated that the FARMP planning team is considering how to define each significant corridor network to specific connections that surround them. He noted that draft plans, maps and documents will become available to the public defining the corridor network for staff, the steering committee, and the public to comment on. He anticipates that the FARMP updates will become more robust as the FARMP heads into the final months of the study and the draft of the final plan is being prepared.

FY 2026 SAFE STREETS AND RPADS FOR ALL (SS4A) NOFO UPDATE

Ms. Riepl stated the FY 2026 Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was announced on March 26th, 2026. This particular grant offers a 60-day application window and applications must be received by May 26, 2026, at 4:00 pm. She noted the Safety Policy Study that was completed in December 2025, was geared specifically towards making applications for implementation projects from the SS4A. Eligible applicants include the MPO's counties, cities, villages, towns and tribes. She noted that the state DOTs are not eligible to apply for these funds. Approximately one billion dollars in funds are available through this funding opportunity. For implementation grants there is over \$687,000,000 and approximately forty to seventy awards will be issued through this particular solicitation. She noted that the identification of the high injury network, the leadership goal and commitment (or Vision Zero)

statement for the MPO area adopted by the Policy Board, and the safety countermeasures provided were laid out as a safety action plan so that our jurisdictions would be able to take advantage of this final effort in the SS4A funding opportunity. She noted that she has sent information to all of our jurisdictions regarding the SS4A funding opportunity and encouraged them to take advantage of this program.

PASSENGER RAIL ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION UPDATE

Ms. Riepl recalled that the Policy Board has directed the MPO to reach out to principals in communities along the existing BNSF rail corridor in ND to start discussions regarding the restoration of passenger rail in ND and what implications that might bring those communities. She noted that she has reached out to Mayors, Commissioners and City Administrators in communities including Valley City, Jamestown, Bismarck-Mandan MPO area jurisdictional partners, Dickinson, Medora and Beach to set up a round table discussion to find out what the restoration of passenger rail in ND would entail for these communities. She is narrowing down a possible date to host the meeting and anticipates sending invitations out within the next week.

Ms. Riepl stated that on May 12th, the Bismarck-Mandan EDC will host a Local Issues Committee. She noted that she would like to bring the topic of Passenger Rail in the Bismarck-Mandan area to their attention for support of our efforts with Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA).

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) WEB CONTENT ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES (WCAG) UPDATE

Ms. Riepl stated the Department of Justice released guidelines on April 24, 2024, for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) as regulations as part of Title II. This guidance requires that all website content be accessible to those with disabilities. The deadline for ADA WCAG compliance was April 24, 2026, but the MPO has been informed that the deadline has been extended by one year to April 24, 2027. The MPO experienced confusion on what this entailed regarding new documents, existing documents, and archival options. The Bismarck-Mandan MPO has been working hard to ensure that its documentation moving forward will be accessible for website posting and the City of Bismarck has taken a proactive approach to contract with a service that will convert the MPO's existing documents on the website to be accessible in an HTML accessible document. Ms. Riepl asked that if anyone encounters broken links due to the MPO performing accessibility updates, to please contact the MPO directly so that the issues can be fixed.

***SECRETARY'S NOTE:** Chair Schmitz had declared the meeting adjourned at 2:04 pm. Ms. Riepl stated that she had other business to discuss with the Board. Roll call of the Board members was called to reconvene the meeting. The Board members in attendance were Mr. Froelich, Ms. Berglund, Mr. Bakken and Chair Schmitz.*

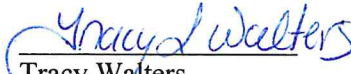
OTHER BUSINESS

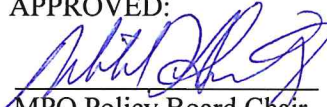
Ms. Riepl stated that on April 14, 2026, NDDOT provided the Consolidated Planning Grant (CPG) distribution for 2027. The Bismarck-Mandan MPO has received an additional \$36,000 due to 2024 North Dakota FTA 5304 funds. She noted that the MPO will work the additional \$36,000 into the 2027 UPWP budget. The MPO staff will be finalizing the studies and allocating the appropriate monies toward the studies to begin the development of the 2027-2028 UPWP. She noted that the jurisdictional partners would be seeing the final studies list for their approval.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Schmitz adjourned the meeting at 2:06 p.m. The next scheduled meeting will take place May 19, 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