

Faribault-Martin County Joint Transit Board
Prairieland Facility Conference Room
801 East 5th Street
Truman, MN 56088
Friday October 12, 2018 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 a.m. by Board Chairman Tom Loveall

Joint Transit Board members present were: Faribault County Commissioners Loveall, Young, Warmka, Roper, and Groskreutz, Martin County Commissioners Schmidtke, Mahoney, Smith, Flohrs, and Belgard. Also present was Jeremy Monahan, Faribault – Martin County Transit Director.

Motion made by Commissioner Schmidtke, seconded by Commissioner Mahoney to approve the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Roper, seconded by Commissioner Young to approve the minutes from the August 17, 2018 Faribault – Martin County Transit Board Meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion made by Commissioner Mahoney, seconded by Commissioner Belgard to approve the minutes from the September 7, 2018 Executive Committee Meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Monahan noted that some of the wording for the October 5, 2018 Executive Committee minutes might not have made some points clear. He stated the issues were in the section regarding relaying concerns to the consultants that were visiting regarding the 5-year plans, Monahan had noted some of the lag time for funding but neglected to point out that the funding from the State is done quarterly. Jean Meyer of MnDOT had noted this concern after reading the meeting minutes. Also that Commissioner Groskreutz had noted that it took a long time for any system modifications to be completed and authorized before implementation could be done. Meyer noted that there was not any delay of the changes done by MnDOT rather that it is a process to ensure that the proposed changes are properly vetted. Discussion ensued regarding these changes and the minutes for the October 5th meeting are not to be amended but that these concerns could be noted in the meeting minutes for this meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner Groskreutz, seconded by Commissioner Belgard to approve the minutes from the October 5, 2018 Executive Committee Meeting as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of Old Business ensued regarding the Transit System Modification Request that Monahan has been working on with Jean Meyer of MnDOT and working closely with the Executive Committee as well. Monahan stated that on October 1, 2018 the previously approved system modifications were implemented for the Prairie Lakes Transit System. This included reworking the timing and stops for the Red and Green Deviated Routes in Fairmont, eliminating an hour of Demand Response service between 5:00 am and 6:00 am for Fairmont Monday

through Friday, eliminating the Friday evening 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm Buccaneer Route service for Blue Earth, and using those eliminated hours of service to create an additional mid-day round trip on the Gold Route shuttle between Fairmont and Blue Earth.

The goals for these changes are:

- Red and Green routes to be able to be run more efficiently and have less instances of falling behind schedule. Also to streamline the transfer process by having a location for both routes have the same time for a stop every hour.
- Create additional access for shopping and medical trips for residents of Faribault County to travel to Fairmont during the middle of the weekday. This need was expressed several times to drivers, dispatchers, and other staff especially since the closing of Walmart in Blue Earth.
- Create operational efficiencies by eliminating underutilized service hours and repurposing them for expressed needs (additional Gold Route trip) along with reducing the overall hours of service to reduce operational costs.

Monahan noted how these changes were well received by staff during the briefings to explain the changes as their input was instrumental in the design of the changes. The public reaction will take some time to judge along with the effectiveness and analysis of goal achievement but they will all be measured periodically. Monahan concluded saying more potential system modifications will be analyzed to increase efficiency to reduce operation costs as much as possible.

Commissioner Young noted that it was disappointing that the Friday evening service in Blue Earth did not get utilized more often as he thought it would be a good service.

Monahan updated the Board on the 2019 Operations Grant. In August, after the initial submittal of the proposed 2019 Operational Budget, Jean Meyer noted some line items that could be areas for cost reductions with further analysis and comparisons to 2017 actual expenditures and 2018 projections based on expenditures through July. The original budget was based primarily on 2018 expenditures through April or May extrapolated through the year due to when the budget was being developed so it could be considered by the Full Board for approval in June so the applications could be submitted in July.

Monahan and Jean Meyer worked together to find some efficiencies and a new budget was submitted at the end of August. In mid-September, the Operational Grant Award notice was sent to the Transit Director and it indicated a 2019 Operational Budget of \$1,180,000 which is a reduction from the \$1,299,350 that was approved by the Board in June. Most of the reductions are expected to be on the line items for wages and fringe benefits as those amounts were not able to be predicted as clearly earlier in the year. A new line item by line item amount will be developed by the Monahan and be ready before the commencement of 2019 Operations to have the ability to track expenditures compared to each line item's budget through the year.

Monahan noted that the Capital purchase application, which for 2019 was asking for two (2) vehicles since zero (0) vehicles were purchased in 2018, will have the award letter sent in the coming weeks. It is anticipated by MnDOT that both vehicle purchases will be approved for the 2019 Capital Purchase Contract.

The Board decided to move the only New Business Item to after Director Reports as the only New Business was a Closed Meeting to complete the Transit Director's performance review.

Discussion regarding the system ridership report ensued. Monahan presented tables and data showing September had the typical drop that has happened in previous years for the system as a whole. The main reduction from August's number comes in Martin County as the ridership on the Faribault County routes increased from August to September and continues to be steadily rising over previous years.

The reasons for Martin County's stagnant or reduced ridership numbers are still unknown. One theory Monahan had was because September 2018 was the first month ever for Prairie Lakes Transit with 19 weekdays of operation. Most months have 21 to 23 weekdays of operations but with this year the dates for the weekends combined with the Labor Day holiday resulted in the lowest number of operational days ever. This combined with the severe storm on September 20th in Fairmont in particular, and while the system was able to maintain full service levels, the operational capacity and speed was quite limited on September 21st and ridership amounts likely suffered as a result.

Commissioner Loveall wondered why Martin County has consistently had a drop in ridership compared to the summertime during September the previous three years. Data to get that answer would be good to have to try and counter that trend. It is hoped that the system modifications made to the Red and Green Routes will make those routes a more attractive option for people needing to travel from an origination in Fairmont to a destination in Fairmont and more new users will be captured in the process. Historically the ridership begins to climb system wide in the fall as the weather cools.

Commissioner Smith noted recent conversations she had regarding transit service in the evenings that could help with Community Education English as a Second Language courses held in the evening and access to area food shelves which are usually open 5:00 p.m. and later. These hours of operation make using the transit to get to them difficult or impossible and many of the users of these and some other functions need transit for their transportation. Commissioner Smith wondered what the process would be to accommodate these people. Monahan said he would need to do an Unmet Needs justification with MnDOT to add service hours to the system. It would be another system modification process with public input and Transit Advisory Committee input and ultimately need to be vetted and approved by MnDOT. Monahan noted he has heard a few requests for evening service, especially in Fairmont, but not enough to warrant completing an Unmet Needs analysis. Discussion ensued regarding how to get data regarding the unmet need along with other users that could need evening service. At the conclusion of the discussion the Board charged Monahan with completing an Unmet Need analysis, in particular for evening service, to determine what may be possible for the system to provide.

Monahan presented the Bill Payment Report showing all bills paid since the Board meeting on August 17, 2018. Monahan pointed out that in August the member counties were paid back 80 percent of their loans for the vehicle purchase in 2017 per the Board's decision to pay back that amount. He also pointed out that repair bills for the vehicles are still high, but not nearly the amount they were in the summer and still within the budget. He noted a number of vehicle

suspension issues that have come up lately. No action was needed, this was just information for the Board to review and get any questions answered regarding expenditures.

Monahan brought up the potential for a second round of Capital purchase applications that MnDOT is proposing to possibly do. Jean Meyer had notified Monahan recently of this possibility and asked what, if any, outstanding "shovel-ready" projects the system might have besides the imminent Transit Facility improvement project. Monahan also noted that the deadline for the list of desired projects was the same day as the board meeting so there was not a lot of time to ponder. The most likely candidates for additional capital spending according to Monahan would be another vehicle to speed up the replacement of the aging buses that are getting expensive to maintain and a new telephone and internet infrastructure project for the Transit Facility. After discussion which included caution from Commissioner Belgard about increasing the amount of spending by the transit system when 2019 already looks to have quite a bit of spending with two vehicles being purchased and a \$250,000 building project. Also noted by Commissioner Groskreutz was that the maximum levies for each county have been set and anything like this would be over and above the already budgeted for transit spending.

After more discussion a motion was made by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Schmidtke authorizing Monahan to request a telephone and internet infrastructure project be requested to MnDOT as a potential additional capital purchase. Commissioner Roper noted during discussion to make sure that any upgrade is of a sufficient technology level to handle future operations such as the potential to make bus reservations online or over a smart phone, which would likely be the way future operations would be. Also discussed was that \$20,000 total project cost is likely and that should be requested to MnDOT. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion regarding the November Executive Committee and December Full Board meeting times and locations showed that they would be held as scheduled.

At this time (11:15 am) a motion was made by Commissioner Belgard, seconded by Commissioner Flohrs and passed unanimously to go into a closed meeting for purposes of completing the annual performance review of the Transit Director.

After 40 minutes time, a motion was made by Commissioner Groskreutz, seconded by Commissioner Belgard to come out of the closed session and adjourn. With no further business to wit, the Board Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:55 am.

JOINT TRANSIT BOARD
FARIBAULT - MARTIN COUNTIES


Tom Loveall, Joint Transit Board Chair

ATTEST: 
William Groskreutz Jr., Board Secretary