



RECORD OF MEETING

SRF Project No.

Project/Meeting Name: Central Dakota MPO Transit Development Plan

Date: December 17, 2025

Time: 2:30 PM

Location: City Finance Department & MS Teams

Attendees: See Attendance List Below

Purpose of Meeting

Third Steering Committee for the Minot Area TDP project.

Summary of Meeting

Attendance:

- John Van Dyke
- Brian Horinka
- **Barry Brooks**
- **Doug Diedrichsen**
- Mark Lyman (Minot Chamber)
- Mike Blessum (City Council)
- Online:
 - Becky Hanson
 - Darrell Francis
 - Tim Bauman

Meeting Notes

Approval of Minutes

- John VanDyke called for approval of the minutes of Steering Committee Meeting #2. First by Mark Lyman; second by Brian Horinka; - All in favor; no nays

Notes by Agenda Item

- Item 1 - Follow-up from Meeting #2: Bill Troe – since Meeting #2, I have been concerned about perception of ridership being lower than the peers used in the analysis. All of the peers have been **urban systems** for a while; however, Minot has been a **rural system**. This may have an impact on ridership. SRF reviewed ridership

on all rural designated providers that have fixed route service. Minot ridership is in the 67th percentile of ridership and 78th percentile in cost. The result in a more apt and favorable comparison of ridership.

- Item 2 - Coordinated Plan: The coordinated human service – public transportation plan is incorporated in the transit development plan work. This plan is focused needs and services for three groups – elderly/seniors, persons with disabilities, and low income populations.
- The steps to establish the plan are - Collect information on the services available, which can be public such as the demand response service through Souris Basin Transportation, service provided by MCT, service operated by assisted living or work programs for persons with disabilities that are private, etc. Steps 2 is to identify needs and gaps that exist between current service and the perceived needs. Step 3 is to develop a list of strategies to address the gaps and then finally integrate the work into the transit plan. When you look at the coordinated plan steps and products, they reflect those of the transit plan.

SRF has started the process of reaching out to agencies that support the needs of the target groups. We have an interview/survey questionnaire finished and have started with outreach. We hope to finish it up in the next month.

Strategies – Will likely focus on mobility management. Is there more that we can do to direct people to the existing services? In addition to the services out there today, we will also be looking for new ideas, such as, are there volunteer driver programs that could be explored?

- Item 3 – Governance discussion: Through the work we are addressing the primary questions of - Does the current format of governance best serve current and future needs? Shortcomings that need to be explored? Is the City Council okay with their roles/responsibilities? Would other options better serve current and potential riders?

Bill Troe provided an overview of the current structure and some alternatives that may be considered. Currently – MCT (fixed route service) is located within Public Works, while paratransit is contracted to Souris Basin Transportation. The format is pretty common for communities of this size, but through the governance structure review, we will explore whether there are more advantageous options. More advantageous, in this case, is defined as: Would another model provide financial benefits to transit or the city? Would another option streamline decision-making? Would another model allow more seamless serving of the entire urbanized area?

Alternatives the team has begun to explore are:

- Alt #1 - Transit becomes its own department within the City. The option creates direct line of communication with top level decision-makers. Little impact on support from other departments and greater budget visibility.

This alternative doesn't appear to add much value as the line of communication is currently pretty direct.

- Alt #2 - Bis-Man Model where there is an appointed Board of Directors who then is responsible for hiring a transit manager and a contractor. It removes much of day-to-day interaction/ responsibility from City. The Council still has responsibility for “big decisions” such as how much service to provide, larger purchases, etc. If this was to be considered, one question is usually what happens to staff. As they are all trained, it is likely the contractor would hire them, but they would have to apply for positions. This can result in some tense times for staff.

One question that comes up in many of these discussions is cost of operations. While the city is not looking to make a profit, contractors are. We have found that many times contractors have a lower overhead rate than cities for full-time employees and the margin allows for profit at no added cost. If there is a high percentage of part-time drivers (not taking benefits), the result may be different.

This alternative is intriguing and seems worthwhile to explore further, especially for those other taxing jurisdictions to share costs, such as Minot School District and Ward County (maybe Surrey too).

- Alt #3 - Transit Authority – With an authority, transit would act much more autonomous. It could be an authority of the city, which would still allow similar department services sharing as today. Or it could be more independent where the authority provides everything from operators, to maintenance to HR to accounting/financial to legal.
- Need to go to the legislature to create the ability to enable an authority. Fargo has also discussed converting to an authority to help with the issues that arise between the two cities (Moorhead, MN). So, there may be a partner to discuss the changes to the Century Code.
- The question was asked, what does SRF think of the options. As of now, SRF believes the status quo or a standalone department are likely the best options. The overall service is small and the added burden of more full-time positions will likely increase costs and getting through the legislature (because it would create another government entity that is not really all that support today) could be difficult.

John VanDyke input – If the idea was to create an authority, exploration should advance now as it will take four to six years to work through the legislative steps.

- Item 4 - Fare Free Transit: Bill Troe – We have been seeing more agencies ask the question about going fare free. Thus, it was included in the scope of our work on the transit plan. The critical item is to figure out how to replace the fare revenue that is collected.

Current farebox revenue - \$77,000; Considerations - fareboxes require maintenance and need to be replaced - this is not cheap.

Non-revenue considerations - fareboxes play role in passenger counting data collection. Likely increased ridership.

Eliminating fares would likely INCREASE ridership. Studies show typical increases in ridership of one-third when fare are removed.

Mike Blessum – One main consideration to evaluate is does the state have concerns that fares aren't there? (City would ultimately pay the gap that fares aren't covering any longer). Mike would rather see more people in buses.

Brian Horinka - Key item to consider is there would be riders getting on and staying on for long periods with no real destination. Bill Troe stated that rider rules can be created that requires a "resting period", where riders must exit following a run and wait a specific time before getting back on. This puts responsibility on operators to enforce and enforcement takes time and can result in confrontations. These need to have a solution.

Tim Bauman - Maybe farefree is not the right route to go; but what about purchasing bus fares for kids? Partnerships with school district to purchase fares. Effectively, the City is purchasing the fare on behalf of certain user groups.

Mike Blessum - Can drivers obtain the basic necessary info to provide a fare card that captures all the necessary data, but once you have the fare card each time it's used it provides the necessary data. Certain number of tickets would be provided to certain user groups. Similar to Minot Public Schools at this time for students. This information can be extracted.

Next Steps

- Develop and present fixed route service modifications that improve service and support better service themes.
- Continue with assessing farefree concept.
- Interviews with agencies and outlining the coordinated plan.
- Public Meetings – January 20: two meetings over the day. Both in City Hall.