Metro COG welcomed a new staff member, Anna Pierce as the new Assistant Planner on December 1. Anna will be coordinating the geographic information system (GIS) efforts across the metropolitan planning area. One of her first tasks has been to review the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) performance measures. Anna has also been helping out on various other projects with staff.

Anna is originally from Minneapolis, but came to NDSU to study Landscape Architecture. Anna graduated in 2014 with a B.A. in Environmental Design and worked at local residential design company in West Fargo for a year. Then she expanded her skills by relocating to Baltimore, MD, where she further developed her GIS skills and worked with regional MPOs and local governments on transportation planning projects. Now, Anna is back in the Midwest working at Metro COG!

Metro COG is committed to ensuring all individuals regardless of race, color, sex, age, national origin, disability/status as a qualified individual with a disability, veteran status, or income status have access to Metro COG’s programs and services. Meeting facilities will be accessible to individuals with disabilities. Metro COG will make a good faith effort to accommodate requests for translation services and related materials. Please contact Savanna Leach at: leach@fmmetrocog.org

Thank you for your interest in Metro COG. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact Savanna Leach at: leach@fmmetrocog.org

Welcome to Anna Pierce!

Metro COG Staff:

- Adam Allenburg
  Community and Transp. Analyst
- Dan Farnsworth
  Transp. Planner
- Savanna Leach
  Executive Secretary
- Michael Mabכוכ
  Sr. Transp. Planner
- Anna Pierce
  Assistant Planner

2019 Long Range Transportation Plan

Metro COG is looking forward to starting the LRTP update process in early 2018. As the metropolitan area evolves, the 2019 plan will give jurisdictions an opportunity to reexamine their values towards relevant elements of transportation including pedestrians, bicyclists, automobile drivers, transit users, and freight shippers, as well as provide an opportunity to consider how the regional transportation system should look and function in the future.

Passing of Bill Christian

As many of you know, Bill Christian, Executive Director of Metro COG, passed away on October 17. On behalf of all of us at Metro COG, we would again like to thank everyone in the community, especially the members of our Policy Board and Transportation Technical Committee, for their support and also extend our sincere and heartfelt condolences to Bill’s family and loved ones.
MATBUS Transit Facility Analysis & Development Strategy

Since August 2017, MATBUS and Metro COG have been working on a transit facility analysis and development strategy. Part of the reason for this study is that the current rolling stock of MATBUS has grown substantially since the Metro Transit Garage (MTG) was first designed in 2006. Growth in the fleet has resulted from continued increases in ridership and also changing demands of MATBUS ridership, including growth in paratransit services. New route development and increased headways on several routes has resulted in a greatly expanded rolling stock of buses and other transit vehicles. Understanding future system growth is critical to managing facility expansion at the MTG, evaluation of the Ground Transportation Center (GTC) in downtown Fargo, and identifying improvements to future major and minor system hubs - including existing hubs at West Acres Mall and the Courtyard by Marriott in Moorhead.

In addition to fleet growth and changes in ridership, the size and diversity of MATBUS staff has evolved greatly over the past decade - with additional changes anticipated in the years ahead. Changes to MATBUS staff not only relate to the number of employees; changes are also anticipated based on decisions related to contractors and the potential transition to a more unified administrative structure to support a transit authority for the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area. Understanding the administrative and organizational framework for MATBUS is critical to planning for future facilities at both the GTC and MTG.

The recently completed 2016-2020 Transit Development Plan (TDP) outlines a conservative, yet thoughtful, expansion of MATBUS routes in the metropolitan area. Some of these improvements are imminent and programmed in Metro COG’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). As part of the analysis and development strategy, many of the route concepts in the TDP will be evaluated for consistency with future needs of MATBUS - specifically, their impacts on existing and future facilities at both bus stops and transit hubs. Additionally, more exploration is needed on longer term route concepts and operational service levels. Understanding future operational changes assists in a better understanding of how to improve and expand transit facilities, and also accounts for more progressive system facility needs for MATBUS at both the stop level and at major and minor system hubs in the area.

Alternate Route/Traffic Incident Management Guidebook

Metro COG, along with safety professionals and other stakeholders in the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area, has developed an Alternate Route and Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Guidebook for the region. The primary goal of the guidebook is to assist officials and emergency responders in streamlining response times to emergency situations where the diversion of traffic to alternate routes is required. The guidebook allows responders to confidently divert traffic along pre-approved routes that will be devoid of obstacles or impediments to large volumes and types of traffic, including semi-trailer trucks.

The guidebook contains a series of maps which highlight which alternate/detour routes are to be initiated in the event of a closure for an identified section of interstate or highway in the area. Items such as traffic signals, railroad crossings, stop-controlled intersections, and other items of note along the alternate route are identified on the maps along with where personnel should be posted to assist drivers.

Major traffic incidents and events requiring alternate routes to be employed to not occur often in the region, but having established detour routes is helpful should an emergency situation occur. Transportation agencies and first responders in the region can be confident that the alternate routes designated in the guidebook will support the initial diversion of traffic, helping to decrease the chance of secondary incidents and provide a safer incident scene for first responders.

Website Update

Metro COG is excited to let you know that we are beginning the process of updating our website. The new site will have a new design, layout, and will allow you to better find current and previous plans and studies we have worked on. The site will also have links to important local and regional transportation projects in the region as well demographic data, maps, and community services. Look for these and more changes at www.fmmetrocog.org in the coming months!

Comprehensive & Transportation Plans - Dilworth and Casselton

Metro COG is currently working with the cities of Dilworth, MN and Casselton, ND in updating their comprehensive plans. These documents serve a number of broad purposes for cities and counties. They are designed to guide the future actions of a community based upon a long-term vision for preferred growth over the course of 20 to 30 years. They also provide a foundation for land development regulations, including zoning and subdivision decisions, and offer guidance to landowners, developers, and city officials on future land uses and development policies. But most importantly, they reflect the community’s goals, aspirations, and expectations for general well-being and a higher quality of life.

Both of these comprehensive and transportation plans will provide blueprints for future activities while helping to guide prospective actions by both the cities and the communities. It is envisioned that, through the plan process, community goals, objectives, and policies will be developed which will incorporate long-range considerations and actions with short-range decisions and actions. With both of these plans, citizens will be asked their thoughts and opinions on ways to improve the quality of their communities, taking into account social, economic, and physical factors.

Moorhead 12th Avenue South Corridor Study

Metro COG and the City of Moorhead will soon be kicking off a corridor study along 12th Avenue South, from the Red River to Main Avenue. This corridor is of key interest to both Moorhead and Metro COG as it is a vital east-west arterial roadway in the area. The study will analyze current and future traffic conditions, identify potential vehicle level-of-service (LOS) improvements, and examine the impacts of potential improvements with respect to traffic operations, safety, transit needs, and bicycle and pedestrian movements - including the possibility of bike lanes or other facilities. The study will also take a look at issues such as recent vehicle crashes, on-street parking, access management, land use, roadway impacts, and right-of-way needs.

It is anticipated that the final document will include an in-depth analysis of different planning-level layouts, as well as preliminary cost estimates for potential improvement alternatives. Public input will also be a key component of the plan as Moorhead and Metro COG seek feedback on needs, issues, alternatives, benefits, and constraints.

Title VI Report

As a recipient of federal funds, Metro COG is required to comply with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and all related regulations and statutes. Metro COG’s commitment to the Title VI program assures that no person or group(s) of persons shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability/handicap, and income status, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any and all programs, services, or activities administered by Metro COG, regardless of whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not. Metro COG also assures that every effort will be made to prevent discrimination through the impacts of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. In addition, Metro COG will provide meaningful access to services for persons with Limited English Proficiency.

Metro COG staff is currently developing the 2018 Title VI Report. The report will evaluate the demographics of the planning area, summarize the public outreach activities Metro COG participated in over the past year, identify any Title VI complaints, and provide an overview of the organization, staffing, and structure of Metro COG and its decision makers.

If you ever have any comments or concerns, please contact Metro COG’s Title VI Coordinator, Adam Altenburg, at 701.323.3242 ext. 34 or email at altenburg@fmmetrocog.org.