



North Dakota Senate

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COMMITTEES:
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SB 2254 Testimony Senate Transportation Committee January 30, 2025

Chair Clemens and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

SB 2254 is before you because great things are happening in North Dakota. We continue to experience population growth. With more people calling North Dakota home, we get to experience amazing opportunities and growing pains. Additionally, the in-state migration of North Dakotans moving to our larger cities for a variety of reasons has expanded the growth for those communities. This growth is captured in the 2020 Census, which as many of you know impacts a variety of funding formulas that our state, counties, cities and Tribal governments depend on, including transit.

Because of their population growth, Minot and Fargo both have experienced a change in their community designation for the purposes of transit funding from the Federal government. This has led to both communities receiving a reduction in Federal funding for their community transit programs. Transit that their residents depend on to get to work, school, medical appointments and enjoy the amenities their communities provide. As inflation continues to impact household budgets, public transit becomes a growing option for North Dakotans looking to reduce their spending or who can't afford repairing or replacing a vehicle.

SB 2254 proposes a one-time appropriation to the ND Department of Transportation to provide grants to the four communities with fixed route transit to assist with the growing costs and reduced funding they are currently experiencing. The reason for a one-time appropriation is to bridge the biennium for a focused study to occur to allow the communities with fixed route transit and the NDDoT to identify potential funding formulas to propose to the 70th Legislative Assembly. The current funding formula only takes into account the number of riders who are disabled or above a certain age. It does not take into consideration general ridership, which includes North Dakotans who depend on public transit for their job, education, commerce, healthcare needs and general enjoyment of the city they live in.

The investment of Federal COVID relief dollars in these cities over the past two biennia allowed them to continue to function with small adjustments. With the infusion of these funds no longer an option combined with their population-based designation change they are experiencing the perfect storm that seriously jeopardizes their ability to meet the demands of their growing communities. Additionally, if the current Congress enacts the fiscal restraint that they have been alluding to it could lead to further reduction in Federal funds. So, the study is not just necessary, but very timely. We believe that tapping into the talent of in-state consultants who have helped legislators, state agencies and local governments maximize funding opportunities for other infrastructure projects will lead to a sustainable funding model for the future of fixed route transit throughout North Dakota.

Following me you will hear from the transit directors from Minot, Grand Forks and Fargo who will be able to share how the transit systems they lead positively impact their respective communities. They will also provide you with greater detail of the fiscal constraints they are facing and how the one-time funding can hold them over until a longer term, more sustainable funding model can be developed.

I hope you'll provide SB 2254 with a Do Pass recommendation and I'm happy to stand for any questions or comments you may have.

2020 UACE	2020 Name	State(s)	FTA	2020 Population	2020 Density (Population per square mile)	2010 Population	2010 Density (Population per square mile)	Comment 1 (Name Changes and New UZAs)	Comment 2 (FTA Threshold Changes)
57655	Minot, ND	ND	8	50,925	1,909.4	Previously had a rural designation		New UZA	Crossed 50k Threshold
29089	Fargo, ND--MN	ND, MN	5, 8	216,214	2,781.6	176,676	2,514.3		Crossed 200k Threshold
34219	Grand Forks, ND--MN	ND, MN	5, 8	68,160	2,573.6	61,270	2,506.6		
07921	Bismarck, ND	ND	8	98,198	2,346.2	81,955	2,114.6		

2020 Name	State(s)	FTA	2000 Population	2000 Density (Population per square mile)	1990 Population	1990 Density (Population per square mile)
Minot, ND	ND	8				
Fargo, ND--MN	ND, MN	5, 8	142,477	3,110.4	121,336	2,356
Grand Forks, ND--MN	ND, MN	5, 8	56,573	3,376.4	58,103	3,073
Bismarck, ND	ND	8	74,991	2,210.5	66,476	1,819

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/2020-census-changes-uzapopulation>