



2024 Transit Plans Update

Fairbanks North Star Borough

DRAFT Transit Plan Update

Prepared for:



FAST Planning

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1. Executive Summary

Purpose

The Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Planning partnered with the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) to update the 2013 Short- and Long-Term Transit Plan for the Metropolitan Area Commuter System (MACS) and update the 2015 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) to improve transit and coordination between providers in the Borough. **This document consists only of the 2024 Transit Plan. The 2024 CHSTP is available as a separate document.**

Each of these plans impacts the other. They were updated at the same time for more efficient and effective public engagement, to use the most current transportation data, and to develop transit plans that are informed by rider and provider needs in the FNSB.

Updating these plans fulfills federal requirements for the FNSB to receive the grant funding necessary to provide transit service. It is also an essential step in continuing to provide transit services that meet the needs of the FNSB.

Vision & Goals

The vision and goals for the Transit Plan shape the plan’s recommendations and were developed in coordination with MACS Transit, FAST Planning, and the project’s Steering Committee.

Transit Plan Update Vision and Goals

VISION “The MACS Transit system is an investment in our subarctic communities, connecting people with opportunities through access to jobs, healthcare, education, and destinations, with dependable, inclusive, safe and equitable service in all seasons.”



GOALS

<p>1 Maximize transit system efficiency</p>	<p>3 Connect the MACS system to destinations through the wider transportation network</p>	<p>5 Coordinate transit decisions with local and regional planning priorities</p>	<p>7 Develop a plan for Communication, Education, and Awareness</p>
<p>2 Provide accessible, equitable service in all seasons</p>	<p>4 Connect riders with economic opportunities and continue to bring economic benefits to the Borough</p>	<p>6 Protect the environment, improve air quality, and promote alternate fuels</p>	<p>8 MACS transit is dependable, welcoming, consistent and preferred transportation</p>



Needs & Opportunities

After analyzing existing conditions and receiving feedback from stakeholders and the community, the project team identified a range of transit needs and opportunities that the Transit Plan can address in its recommendations.

1. Staff recruitment and retention
2. Bus stop inventory and data collection
3. Funding levels
4. Fare options
5. Service needs:
 - Weekend service
 - Service frequency
 - Transfer points
 - Rural connector routes
 - Route changes (Brown, Red, Blue, Orange, Purple, and Yellow)
 - Potential new fixed route services (Fort Wainwright and Alaska Railroad)
6. Van Tran enhancements:
 - Expand capacity
 - Simplify application process
7. Hire Human Services Transportation Coordinator
8. Systemwide accessibility improvements
 - Bus stop connectivity
 - Winter maintenance improvements
9. Roadway improvements to enhance connections to transit

Recommendations

The following are recommendations that FAST Planning, MACS Transit and partner agencies can pursue to address the needs and goals identified above.

These Transit Plan recommendations are categorized as either “constrained” or “unconstrained.” For the “constrained” scenario, the constraining factor is continued operator and administrative staffing limitations at MACS Transit and Van Tran. In the “unconstrained” scenario, improved staffing and resource levels are assumed.

Please see the full Transit Plan document for a table of recommendations that includes priorities and expected timeframes for implementation.

Constrained Recommendations

1. Continue to pursue federal funding programs to provide increased capacity.
2. Work with FAST Planning and the Fairbanks North Star Borough to increase local funding for transit.
3. Implement a new, comprehensive Software as a Service (SaaS) platform that includes:
 - a. Electronic fare payment options
 - b. Fare capping
 - c. Real-time bus tracking and trip planning



- d. Pre-trip and post-trip reports and incident reporting
 - e. Driver scheduling and bidding processes
 - f. New process for inventorying MACS Transit bus stops and updating the system's General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS)
4. Incentivize recruitment and staff retention.
 5. Consolidate and reduce route deviations along the Red and Blue Lines.
 6. Simplify the Van Tran application process or provide even more application support.

Un-Constrained Recommendations

1. Expand capacity for "B" and "C" service categories for Van Tran.
2. Reinstigate Saturday fixed route service and add Sunday fixed route service.
3. Increase service span on the MACS transit fixed-route system to offer earlier and later trips.
4. Improve the frequency of the Red and Blue lines so they run every 15 minutes or better during peak weekday periods.
5. Provide bidirectional service on the Brown and Purple Lines and improve service to every 15 minutes or better for during peak weekday periods.
6. Extend the Orange Line east to Easy Street and west to Chena Pump Road.
7. Reroute the Purple Line to serve only neighborhoods north of the Parks Highway.
8. Reroute the Yellow Line to focus on service between the Fairbanks International Airport and Downtown Fairbanks and increase its frequency to 15 minutes or better during peak weekday and weekend periods.
9. Consider opportunities to improve access for populations with high need and ridership potential.
10. Identify MACS Transit bus stops for improved rider amenities such as shelters.

Fast Planning & Partner Agency Recommendations

These recommendations will improve transit service and address the needs and goals identified in this plan, but require significant involvement and leadership from agencies besides MACS Transit and Van Tran.

1. Work with the FNSB, AKDOT&PF, and MACS Transit to construct pedestrian crossing treatments at high ridership bus stops that currently lack marked crosswalks.
2. Work with the FNSB, AKDOT&PF, and MACS Transit to construct sidewalks, bike lanes, or other active transportation facilities on corridors with low pedestrian connectivity scores on the MACS Transit network, where applicable.
3. Work with the FNSB, AKDOT&PF, and MACS Transit to create new, formalized public transfer points for the fixed route system.
4. Work with the FNSB, AKDOT&PF, and MACS Transit to perform road diets, intersection, and bus stop accessibility improvements on select corridors with high active transportation and transit ridership potential.
5. Develop a transportation provider "clearinghouse" and create a Human Services Transportation Coordinator role independent of any of the local agencies to help riders navigate multiple providers.

Winter Maintenance Recommendations

These recommendations focus on winter maintenance that pertains to all agencies (not just MACS Transit) involved in winter maintenance.



1. Pursue FTA Flex Funding for use as a snow removal program.
2. Institute adopt-a-sidewalk or adopt-a-stop program to promote a collective spirit around snow removal.
3. Determine a “core” set of MACS Transit bus routes for priority snow removal that can be published on the MACS Transit website and channels.
4. Invest in new equipment and technology dedicated to removing snow from active transportation facilities.

Looking Ahead And Conclusions

While this plan looks ahead approximately 20 years, it is recommended to review and update every five years to respond to community and resource changes and inform the ongoing transportation planning processes FAST Planning and AKDOT. Funding sources, projects, and priorities may be updated and should be informed by continued public feedback. Assuming adequate resources, successful implementation of this plan’s recommendations will meet objectives and achieve goals for the Fairbanks transit system.