

Otter Express Joint Powers Board Meeting Minutes

February 9, 2026

The Otter Express Joint Powers Board Meeting was called to order by Chair Anthony Hicks at 1:01pm on Monday February 9, 2026. Attendance was as follows:

Board Members	Representing	Present	Absent
Hicks, Anthony Chair	City of Fergus Falls	X	
Bucholz, Dan	Otter Tail County	X	
Kvamme, Scott	City of Fergus Falls	X	
Lahman, Bob	Otter Tail County	X	
Sandbakken, Stephanie	Wilkin County	X	
Sjostrom, Deb	Otter Tail County	X	
Smith, Jonathan	City of Perham	X (Teams)	
Staff in Attendance	Representing	Present	Absent
Groothius, John	MnDOT	X	
Sullivan, Kayla	Otter Express	X	

Approval of Agenda

A motion and second were made by Bob Lahman and Dan Bucholz and unanimously carried to approve today's agenda.

Approval of Minutes

A motion and second were made by Dan Bucholz and Deb Sjostrom and unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the January 20, 2026 meeting.

Service Levels and New Opportunities

Kayla discussed January 2026 ridership stats and previous areas that were served and possible new opportunities. Some discussion by the board members were to focus on expanding ridership on highway 210 (possibly Henning to Breckenridge), discussion on a FT driver in Breckenridge, bus garage facilities in Parkers Prairie and Perham, and possible local drivers in those locations, & an I94 route from Fergus Falls to Moorhead (F/M MAT bus station). This discussion was for the board to think about as all of this is built into the budget which is due this June.

Grant 2027

A discussion was initiated by Kayla on the timeline & key aspects of the MnDOT grant for 2027. The grant is open in May and due at the end of June. The important documents, service levels, wages, miles, facilities, hours, etc were expanded on.

Facility

Kayla discussed options for facilities. The current admin/garage building is on an annual lease. If other garage spaces in the counties are going to be approved then this large space would not be needed. There are funds at the federal level for a new facility and that would take approximately 5-8 years from start to finish. Anthony discussed some land the city of Fergus Falls owns that could be a possibility for a new facility, and the potential of renovating or ownership. Kayla mentioned that there is a 20% local share for a new facility. Kayla gave information on facilities for the board to think on so that we can have the information for the grant.

Service Vehicle

The former service vehicle (pick up) we were using last year has been sold by PAI. John G. mentioned the possibility of doing a procurement with MnDOT to secure a vehicle.

Sell Bus

Kayla discussed selling one 500 series bus that we do not have in service to another MnDOT public transportation agency as they have a need for one. Kayla got two appraisals for that 500 series bus. The board approved to sell one 500 series bus for \$60,000. That motion was made by Bob L and seconded by Stephanie S. Kayla discussed the need to sell 3 400 series buses as we can manage without those three buses. The proceeds from the sales of buses will go into our reserve fund. A motion was made by Bob L and seconded by Scott K to sell the three 400 series buses.

Board Approvals

The board will approve any out state travel to include classes, conferences, etc. The board will approve the Executive Director's PTO if it is 5 consecutive days or more. Kayla mentioned if she is gone more than a couple of days that another admin staff is on site in her absence.

Employee health claims in January. One claim was submitted for a health care visit and a prescription. The board noticed an adjustment and asked Kayla to check on that to ensure it wasn't processed through insurance prior to paying. There is potentially two more claims for medical visits. When Kayla gets all the claims and verifies the information the claims

will go for payment. Deb S asked for health claims to be removed from the website. Kayla said she will take care of that. Scott K made the motion to approve payment of health claims and Dan B seconded the motion.

PERA

Kayla did not have any update at the time the agenda was sent out. At the time of the meeting she did get some information from a PERA staff and is not working on getting the information on all the specific of PERA and how to enroll staff.

Bylaws

Kayla mentioned to the board that there are no bylaws currently and if the board has an interest that would be a board duty. A sample from another public transportation agency was provided as a starting point. Stephanie S said she would start the review process and have the Wilkin County attorney (Jason Hastings) be the legal representative.

Admin/Support Position

Kayla asked for an addition position be added. This position could assist the executive director with some daily tasks that are behind and to support the admin staff. MnDOT consultants will work up a job description and wage range and will be brought to the board at a future meeting.

Formula Funding

John G explained the formula that MnDOT will be implementing for 2027. Part of the discussion is to have as close as possible budget numbers so that we don't lose out on any funding with the formula. This includes getting our service areas decided on, hours, facilities, etc.

JPB Agreement

Kayla spoke of the JPB Agreement so that the board understands it was written for one year and they would need to discuss and decide as a board.

Future Board Meetings. All meeting will be held on the second Monday of each month at 1:00pm at the Otter Express office (1225 N Tower Rd., Fergus Falls, MN). The next board meeting will be April 13, 2026.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:53pm.