Otter Express JPB Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2026

The Otter Express JPB meeting was called to order by Chair Hicks at 1:00pm on Monday, May 11, 2026.

Attendance was as follows:

Board Member	Representing	Present	Absent
Hicks, Chair Anthony	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 (Teams)	
Sjostrom, Deb	Otter Tail County	X	
Smith, Jonathan	City of Perham	X	
Staff in Attendance	**Representing**	**Present**	**Absent**
Groothuis, John	MnDOT	X	
Kraft, Adam	DRB	X (Teams)	
Lauinger, Adam	Condit CPA	X (Teams)	
Sullivan, Kayla	Otter Express	X	

Approval of the Agenda
A motion and a second was made by Dan Bucholz and Bob Lahman and unanimously carried to approve today's agenda.

Approval of Minutes
A motion and a second was made by Deb Sjostrom and Scott Kvamme with a change in the denial section to state a rider declined the ride (when offered an alternate time, or any other reason as it is not a denied ride as the rider declined the alternate ride).

MnDOT Consultant Services
Adam had a presentation that he explained. Kayla will email out the presentation to the board members. Adam has been communicating with Jason (Operations Manager) to get some details and data to Adam regarding our service.
He has identified the towns, corridors, and counties that we be part of this project, and visiting with Kayla and Jason got a better understanding of the service information, some past history of some of the commuter service.
or extended service that they provided, thoughts on what would work, what didn't work, why. And then collected the 2025 scheduling trip data, which we turned into

spatial data that was MnDOT that was able to map those points, the trip start and end points, as well as the number of trips. Adam will look into areas that we many met the needs and any unmet areas. A subcontractor (AECOM) is assisting with this project and will supply remix data (census data). The consultants will get us data for the 2027 operating grant. The consultants will have some data ready for the June 8th board meeting. Adam discussed the Perham area along highways 210 and 78 to include Battle Lake. In all areas they are looking at population, job density, traffic patterns, senior populations, disability residents, poverty status, household dynamics, mode to work, time leaving to go to work and commute length, and vehicles by household. Adam identified some key data points. Those are hospitals, health care, veterans, pharmacies, health department, nursing homes, public schools, and all different kinds of schools. He is also mentioned along some corridors around towns that do not have any service currently. He will work to identify some areas where public and private services are provided, and where coordination may be beneficial for both parties. He will also look at service hours and days. He may also be able to get into reviewing our bus fares. By June 1st, is Adam's deadline for completing the final analysis and having those draft recommendations to present to Kayla and her team. And then Adam will follow up with a presentation to the joint power support meeting on the 8th. By the end of the month, Adam will have the final service report and budget information. Into July Adam will move int marketing and potential expansion. Bob Lahman asked about the Parkers Prairie area and highways 10 and 29. Kayla will get that additional highway information to the consultants.

Finance

A motion and a second was made by Scott Kvamme and Dan Bucholz and passed unanimously to approve the financial reports. Adam spoke of the all funds report. This is a report that I put together based on the meeting with Kayla and John. And the purpose was to kind of show what's on the books currently and what we need to do to bring them into compliance. Adam explained the non-MnDOT accounts should be structured going forward, splitting the bus sale and county/city local contributions into specific accounts rather than a large bucket that they are in now. The bus sale will go into the reserve account, but it is restricted, John said. Those funds will have to be used for public transit. John recommended doing 50% of the local share, each of the partners to report 50% of that. And then the 50% remaining would be for expenses like this (pickup) that you can utilize without MnDOT strings on that. The local share and transactions such as bus sales should be tracked separately. When MnDOT auditors audit they will only audit what is reported to MnDOT. Kayla inputs financials to MnDOT from Adam's P & L report monthly. A board question was asked if we have enough cash before we get our federal payment. Kayla thought we will be

ok. John thought we should have the federal payment at the end of May. Kayla and Adam spoke about how it is challenging with a new organization and CPA and that it took some time to get us both on the same page. Currently, the finances seem to be working well with Kayla and Adam. Adam mentioned he will do a few corrections.
2027 Operating Grant
Kayla had the operating grant checklist in the board packet. This is informational just so the board understands what all is required from MnDOT. The board agreed to continue to lease the main office/garage space from Productive Alternatives. Kayla will ask for a lease from Productive Alternatives. Kayla will bring a resolution to the next board meeting for the grant. Kayla spoke of getting contracts with higher bus fares with counties and health insurance companies. This would be an excellent way to build up our reserve fund so down the road it would be possible that the counties/cities would not have to contribute to local share. Kayla already has a contract with Medica for a higher rate for bus fares as these types of rides take longer time on phone calls for scheduling and time for billing. Kayla discussed her meeting with the Wilkin County DAC manager, Amanda. Kayla let her know that the bus fares will be higher for 2027 to prepare her. Kayla will talk to the manager about a contract for 2027. Kayla mentioned the situation with Productive Alternatives with transporting clients that went to their DAC. They billed an amount and public transit got the base bus fare ($2.00). The federal auditor informed Kayla that the scenario should be flipped. The entity that is providing the service should be getting the bulk fare and the DAC should be getting the smaller amount if they are doing the billing. The reason to this is that the provider doing the service (providing the transportation) is doing the transport, paying wages, paying for fuel & bus maintenance. Kayla mentioned that any DHS rider can be charged at a higher rate. Chair Hicks offered to make it simple and start out at $10 one way for all DHS riders as this will build up the reserve account. Kayla mentioned that a lot of other public transit agencies do transport for DHS riders and those are at a higher rate. Stephanie asked for the contract with Wilkin County DAC and currently there is not one. Stephanie mentioned that the county is supportive of having a bus in Wilkin County so she believes the Commissioners will be helpful in securing a garage space.
Kayla recommended continuing with our current IT, CPA, and Insurance broker for 2027. The time to take to get those up to speed on our business is time consuming. The board agreed to continue with the current vendors. The contract for each was for one year with the option to continue. John spoke about possible federal funding for a facility and the possibility that MnDOT may contribute to part of the local share.

Volunteer Driver

Kayla spoke about having mile reimbursement through the MnDOT grant. This program can be operated 100% through public transportation. This can assist with public transportation in that a bus would not have to do these trips. This can help in the Parkers Prairie area rather than having a bus in that area those riders could be serviced by the volunteer driver program. We can operate the volunteer driver with volunteers across our service area. Any volunteer must go through a background check and insurance has to be covered. There are tax implications that may arise and drivers need to be aware of this. Other agencies in MN utilize the RSVP program and Kayla will investigate that. Kayla will work on the volunteer driver program, and the board suggested possibly a shared position of volunteer driver coordinator with admin assistant. Kayla will bring information back to the board and then a decision can be made.

Service Levels
The Express Loop in Fergus Falls has started as an initial new route. We created a flyer with all the times and pick up and drop off destinations. That was given to each stop. The Village Cooperative asked us to come out and speak to their residents. They had about 50 people at the meeting. We have signage on the bus that is dedicated to the Express Loop. Perham and Wilkin County board members expressed that they would like a 'Loop' in their communities.
Kayla discussed the stats for the Perham riders between the two buses. Jonathan discussed a local Perham driver. Kayla said a job posting has been out to include th day begins and ends in Perham. We have not had a lot of luck getting a local Perham resident to apply.

April Stats & Denials
Kayla explained that the staff offer an alternate time for a requested ride and the board suggested using the word decline as the rider is declining the ride rather than that ride was a denial. Kayla mentioned that since Jan. '26 every month the ridership has increased.
A suggestion was made to get information out to the various summer recreational youth programs. Kayla will get transportation information out to those departments.

Dispatch Software (CTS)
Kayla submitted the CTS invoice for informational purposes. The invoice is the bare bones just to keep the essential parts so that we can continue to operate.

Service Vehicle
Zach located a pickup and it was purchased for less than the board approval amount. It is a Ford F-150, 2016, & 169K miles. The staff are very grateful for the board's approval.

By-laws
Scott graciously made notes to the by-laws and were presented at the last board meeting. We did not have time to review the document and will carry it over to the June meeting.

Future Meetings/Misc.
The next board meeting is on Monday, June 8th and the July meeting is the 13th. The Fly In is on Sept. 22-23 & the fall MnDOT conference is Oct. 19-20.
Dan suggested having Jason (Operations Manager) attend the board meetings.
We will schedule another June meeting, if need be, for the budget (June 22nd, tentatively). A board member asked if we are going to do any bus advertising.
Kayla said she can get the word out on bus advertising. The bus advertising money goes into the reserve account (this can help with local share). Kayla mentioned that Otter Express never guarantees that X bus will stay in your community (if a vendor only does business in Breckenridge that bus with that advertising is not guaranteed to be in that community every day of the year).

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm.