Otter Express JPB Meeting Minutes

July 13, 2026

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	
Sjostrom, Deb	Otter Tail County	X (Teams)	
Smith, Jonathan	City of Perham	X	
Staff in Attendance	Representing	Present	Absent
Cahoon, Jill	AECOM (Consultant)	X (Teams)	
Ebert, Jason	Otter Express	X	
Groothuis, John	MnDOT	X	
Lauinger, Adam	Condit CPAs	X (Teams)	
Sullivan, Kayla	Otter Express	X	
Tomhave, Ben	MnDOT	X (Teams)	

Approval of the Agenda

A motion and a second was made by Stephanie Sandbakken and a second by Bob Lahman and unanimously carried to approve today's agenda.

Approval of Minutes

A motion and a second was made by Bob Lahman and Scott Kvamme and unanimously carried to approve the minutes from June 8, 2026.

MnDOT Consultant Services

Ben T and Jill C gave a presentation on routes and data mainly on Fergus Falls and Perham. Ben spoke on variations of the deviated route in Fergus Falls. Jill spoke on various options for Perham. One option is a deviated route and that does not meet the MnDOT criteria in Perham.

A discussion was held on various options for Fergus Falls and Perham.

A discussion was held on increasing ridership and a marketing effort. The board approved a hire of a marketing position.

Kayla spoke on the two buses and the hours of each in Perham currently. There are two buses in Perham (7-3:30am and 12-5pm). There is not a lot of ridership currently and we cannot cancel the second bus as it has to stay in Perham until 5pm. We are paying almost two full-time drivers for very little work. Kayla mentioned that previously we had two buses in Perham (8-4:30pm & 10-4pm) and on days where demand was not high we could cancel the second bus to Perham and reallocate that resource. A discussion was held to continue to market and advertise and when demand picks up then we can reassess the buses and hours.

Finance

The June reports were discussed. There were no out of the ordinary items in the reports. A motion and a second was made by Stephanie Sandbakken and Jonathan Smith and unanimously carried to approve the finance reports.

Kayla spoke about a potential fraud issue that came about after the agenda was sent out. A lady from NY called and said she received a check from us. Kayla went directly to the bank. The bank advised implementing positive pay to help mitigate any fraud. Kayla is working with the bank to set that up and hopefully this action will take care of any future fraud.

Operating Grant 2027

Kayla submitted in the packet all the documents that are a part of the grant. A lot of the documents are policies that are a requirement of MnDOT. They were all in the packet other than the procurement policy, which MnDOT gave us an extension on. A discussion was held on operator hours and service levels.

The lease for the main building and garage was discussed. OTC attorney reviewed the lease and thought it was ok to proceed. A motion and a second was made by Stephanie Sandbakken and Dan Bucholz. Kayla discussed bus fare for DHS riders. She recommended that we charge $5.00 per ride. Kayla spoke about the time it takes the dispatchers for these riders, the operators spend more time on them, and the billing process takes additional time. Kayla mentioned that in Breckenridge we have a contract for $10.00/per ride. A board member asked why we couldn’t do these DHS rides for $10.00 to keep it consistent. A discussion was held on that these rides are not tax levy dollars on the residents. A discussion was held that increasing bus fares will help build up the reserve so that the entities won’t have to put in local share. A motion and a second was made to charge $5.00 per ride (one way) for each DHS client from Scott Kvamme and Dan Bucholz and unanimously carried to approve the motion. Kayla received a resolution from Wilkin county for 2027.

Stats and Denials
A discussion was held on the stats and denials for June.

Fleet
Kayla recommended to sell the 500 series bus. A motion and a second was made by Bob Lahman and Jonathan Smith and unanimously carried.

Annual Reviews
Kayla discussed that Jonathan asked about how annual reviews are done via email. The former employer PAI did not do annual reviews, so they had not been completed yet at Otter Express. Jonathan said that he believes we should complete a review annually. Kayla provided sample employee reviews in the packet.

By Laws
A discussion was held on by laws. A motion and a second was made by Dan Bucholz and Stephanie Sandbakken and unanimously carried to approve.

Miscellaneous
Stephanie Sandbakken requested to purchase Adobe Pro so that all board documents can be sent in one email.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:15pm