



Community Development Department

DATE: April 6, 2021
FROM: Ben Ehreth, Community Development Director
ITEM: Bis-Man Transit Otto Bremer Grant Application

REQUEST

The Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization, on behalf of Bis-Man Transit, requests approval of an application for private funding through the Otto Bremer Trust to assist in the purchase of one (1) paratransit cutaway bus.

Please place this item on the April 13, 2021 City Commission meeting agenda.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Otto Bremer Trust, reflecting the intent of its founder, Otto Bremer, has made a longstanding commitment to helping people and communities. Grant opportunities such as this one require no local match. Bis-Man Transit previously applied for, and was awarded, Otto Bremer grant funds in 2017.

With this application, Bis-Man Transit is requesting funds in the amount of \$81,600 to purchase a vehicle to expand the current paratransit fleet to allow for a greater spare ratio for the fleet. Currently, 19 paratransit vehicles are in use during maximum service, leaving three spares. The current spare ratio of less than 10% could cause issues in cases of preventative maintenance and breakdowns. The FTA allows a 20% spare ratio and four spare vehicles would nearly provide that.

The Bis-Man Transit Board recommended approval of the Otto Bremer grant application at their November 19, 2020 meeting. Awards are anticipated to be announced in May 2021.

RECOMMENDED CITY COMMISSION ACTION

Staff recommends approval of the Bis-Man Transit application for Otto Bremer grant funding for the purchase of one (1) paratransit cutaway bus.

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Ben Ehreth, AICP | Community Development Director, 355-1842 or
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Deidre Hughes | Bis-Man Transit Executive Director, 258-6817 or
dhughes@bismantransit.com



Bis-Man Transit delivers valued public transportation, linking people, jobs and communities.

November 19, 2020

TO: Bis-Man Transit Board of Directors

FROM: Deidre Hughes, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Otto Bremer Grant

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of this grant application for submittal to the Otto Bremer Trust for the purchase of one additional paratransit cutaway.

BACKGROUND: The Otto Bremer Trust mission reflects the intent of the founder, Otto Bremer. His vision and longstanding commitment to communities during and after the Great Depression endure today through the Otto Bremer Trust. They have built the organization to reflect the challenges and opportunities found throughout Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. They are mindful of Otto's extraordinary legacy and to be faithful stewards of the vision and assets consistent with the Trust's perpetual structure. Otto Bremer's commitment to helping people and communities provides the cornerstone of the Trust's investment philosophy. He recognized then, as we do today, that Good Lives Here.

DISCUSSION: Bis-Man Transit has previously applied for and was awarded an Otto Bremer grant in 2017 for the purchase of one paratransit cutaway bus. This purchase was to replace a vehicle that was outside of its useful life. With this application, Bis-Man Transit is requesting funds to expand the fleet to allow for a greater spare ratio for the paratransit fleet. Currently, 19 paratransit vehicles are in use during maximum service with three spares. With preventative maintenance and breakdowns, a 10% spare ratio could cause issues. The FTA allows for a 20% spare ratio.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: If awarded, there is no local match for this project.

Otto Bremer Grant Application		
	<i>Make/Model</i>	<i>Total</i>
Project 1	2021 Chevrolet 4500 Express	\$ 81,600.00

Review/Submit

Public Transportation Vehicles

Standard Grant Application

Project Title	Public Transportation Vehicles
Purpose	To provide safe, efficient, and reliable modes of transportation for the public in our community.
Proposal Summary	<p>Our project for 2021 is to purchase one new bus to use for public transportation services in the Bismarck/Mandan/Lincoln communities. The bus would be a 14 passenger (5yr/150,000 mile) bus that would be dedicated for use in the paratransit mode of service for those who are incapable of utilizing the fixed route service. Our current fleet consist of 21 paratransit vehicles, with 19 vehicles in maximum services throughout daily operation. With minimal spares in our current fleet and the recent push for social distancing onboard public transportation, Bis-Man Transit runs the risk of being unable to provide the much-needed transportation for at risk individuals in our communities.</p> <p>To address the need for fleet expansion, the Bis-Man Transit Board (a 501(c)3 company) is taking steps to promote efficiency with daily operations. The majority of our service is funded through local, state, and federal tax dollars; however, the lasting effects of the pandemic have greatly impacted that funding, leaving very little for capital expenditures. An Otto Bremer Trust grant award for the purchase of one additional bus would help ensure Bis-Man Transit is able to continue providing safe, reliable, and efficient service for years to come.</p>
Amount Requested	\$81,600.00
Total Program Cost, including requested amount	\$81,000.00
Organization Budget	\$4,318,657.94
Duration in Years	1
Community	<p>Our community is very proactive in trying to meet the transportation needs of our disabled and elderly population. In 2019, over 108,000 paratransit and demand response trips were completed. As our community grows, the need for reliable public transportation grows with it. Not only does the service promotes individual's freedom but it encourages economic growth in the area. Ensuring that the fleet of vehicles is fully functioning and capable of supporting the community needs is of the utmost importance.</p>
Proposed Work	<p>Our current vehicles in maximum service on paratransit for 2020 is 19. With only three spare paratransit vehicles in the fleet, we run the risk of being unable to accommodate all requested rides for the elderly and disabled communities. If awarded for this project, we would be able to add one additional paratransit bus to our fleet ensuring all requested trips are able to be completed.</p>
Impact	<p>The success of public transportation is based on number of various metrics, including ridership numbers, productivity, safety, and customer satisfaction which are tracked monthly. The public is involved in the vision, goals, and upcoming improvements though the use of public participation meetings. Additionally, we have also created the Citizen Transportation Advocacy Group which meets regularly to discuss program initiatives and address potential concerns.</p>
Your Organization and Resources	<p>The Bis-Man Transit Board is a nonprofit entity that is contracted by the City of Bismarck to deliver valued public transportation, linking people, jobs and communities. The operations portion of the system is subcontracted out. The total work force of Bis-Man Transit is approximately 60 employees. The service</p>

provided to the general public includes fixed route, paratransit, and demand response modes. We work directly with local, state, and federal government for funding and approval of various projects.

Since our last Otto Bremer grant application, we have underwent many staffing changes, including a new Executive Director in July of 2020. We have been working hard to improve and solidify stakeholder relationships, rider satisfaction, and create a clear focus for Bis-Man Transit's mission and vision.

Due to COVID-19, state funding has decreased significantly. With decreases in ridership on both paratransit and fixed route, fare revenue has also been impacted.

Bis-Man Transit, established in 1987, has been providing Bismarck and Mandan with paratransit and demand response services since 1990. Fixed route services were introduced in 2004 in an effort to create a fully comprehensive public transportation system for the community. Bis-Man Transit continually evaluates the system to ensure transportation needs are being met.

Partners and Networks

We work with the State of North Dakota to purchase paratransit buses from the State Bid. This ensures we are able to receive the best possible price while complying with all purchasing regulations.

We also work with a variety of user groups such as local colleges, senior centers, retirement communities, centers for independent living, and many more. These partnerships helped to grow knowledge of public transportation in the community, increase ridership, and clarifying the direction of public transit.

Looking Ahead

The population and geographical area of the Bismarck-Mandan communities continues to grow. With this growth, it is vital that public transit grows as well. Public transportation reduces congestion on the roads while encourage economic growth within the service area. Access to education, employment, recreation, and medical appointments is integral to the entire community, not just those with personal vehicles. In order to continue operating at a high level of service for the elderly and disabled community, fleet expansion needs to be addressed.

Other Information

Navigating public transportation with the current COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging. Although Bis-Man Transit was awarded CARES Act Funding to assist with the cost of operations, we have experienced a decrease in State Funding. This decrease is projected to outlast the projected CARES Act funding assistance. In order for Bis-Man Transit to address upcoming fleet expansion, we must seek outside financial assistance. Ensuring all fleet vehicles are within useful life parameters as well offer increased ridership opportunities in the future is of the utmost importance.

Staff continues to work in person, during this time, but is prepared to work remotely if need be. Meetings take place remotely and will continue for the foreseeable future in an effort to promote social distancing for office staff.

Paratransit trips are being scheduled to promote social distancing, as well. This has put a strain on our paratransit fleet, creating a need for the purchase of an expansion vehicle.

Standard Grant Financial Info

Fiscal Year Start Month	January
Fiscal Year Start Day	1
Fiscal Year End Month	December
Fiscal Year End Day	31
Previous FY Actual Revenues	\$6,436,292.00

Previous FY Actual Expenses	\$7,159,535.00
Previous FY Actual Net	(\$723,243.00)
Previous FY Budget Revenues	\$5,483,535.85
Previous FY Budget Expenses	\$6,026,716.25
Previous FY Budget Net	(\$543,180.40)
Previous FY Notes	
Year to Date As Of	11/10/2020
YTD Actual Revenues	\$3,964,980.29
YTD Actual Expenses	\$3,166,517.39
YTD Actual Net	\$798,462.90
Annual Budget Revenues	\$4,471,782.66
Annual Budget Expenses	\$4,558,382.66
Annual Budget Net	(\$86,600.00)
YTD Notes	
Balance Sheet As Of	11/10/2020
Current Assets	\$2,781,963.26
Total Assets	\$2,781,963.26
Current Liabilities	\$2,168.84
Total Liabilities	\$2,168.84
Balance Sheet Notes	

Standard Grant Attachments

Organization Contacts (REQUIRED)

Sr. Number	File Name	Attachment Description (Optional)	Created Date
1	Organization Contacts.xlsx	Organization Contacts Bis-Man Transit	11/12/20

Proof of Tax-Exempt Status (REQUIRED)

Sr. Number	File Name	Attachment Description (Optional)	Created Date
1	Proof of Tax-Exempt Status-IRS Determination Letter.pdf		11/12/20

Board List (REQUIRED)

Sr. Number	File Name	Attachment Description (Optional)	Created Date
1	Board List-Board of Directors.xlsx	Board of Directors Effective November 2020	11/12/20

Organization Budgets and Actual Fiscal Performance (REQUIRED)

Sr. Number	File Name	Attachment Description (Optional)	Created Date
1	Organization Budgets and Actual Fiscal Performance-Budget VS Actual FY19.pdf		11/12/20
2	Organization Budgets and Actual Fiscal Performance-Budget VS Actual FY20.pdf		11/12/20

Project Budget (REQUIRED unless requesting general operating support only)

Sr. Number	File Name	Attachment Description (Optional)	Created Date
No Attachments			

Balance Sheet (REQUIRED)

Sr. Number	File Name	Attachment Description (Optional)	Created Date
1	Balance Sheet-Balance Sheet YTD 2020.pdf		11/12/20

Audit

Sr. Number	File Name	Attachment Description (Optional)	Created Date
1	Audit-2019-41169-Deliverables-Audit Report-December 31, 2019.pdf	2019 Financial Statement Audit	11/12/20

990

Sr. Number	File Name	Attachment Description (Optional)	Created Date
1	990-2019 Form 990.pdf		11/12/20

Other Sources of Funding (REQUIRED)

Sr. Number	File Name	Attachment Description (Optional)	Created Date
1	Other Sources of Funding-FY21 State Aid.pdf	Approved by NDDOT	11/12/20

Additional Attachments (optional)

Sr. Number	File Name	Attachment Description (Optional)	Created Date
No Attachments			

Standard Grant Signature

Signature Acknowledgement



Your Full Name