

Transit rates hiked; home buyout OK'd

By Sarah Coomber
The Forum

Paratransit rates are increasing from \$1.50 to \$2 in Fargo, but city commissioners pledged Monday to find help for people who can't pay their fares.

"The real issue is how we can assist people who can't afford the dollar fifty or two dollars," said Mayor Bruce Furness.

Three Paratransit users told the board they cannot afford a fare increase.

City Commissioner Erv Inniger said the Transit Advisory Committee feels "very strongly" that the fare should go up 50 cents but also sees the need to help riders. Inniger said some people spend more than 30 percent of their income on Paratransit.

"That's out of line," he said.

Furness said Southeast Human Service Center has agreed to help write applications for grants that would fund transportation and identify who needs help.

The Transit Advisory Committee also recommended contacting employers about offering assistance to employees with disabilities who take public transportation.

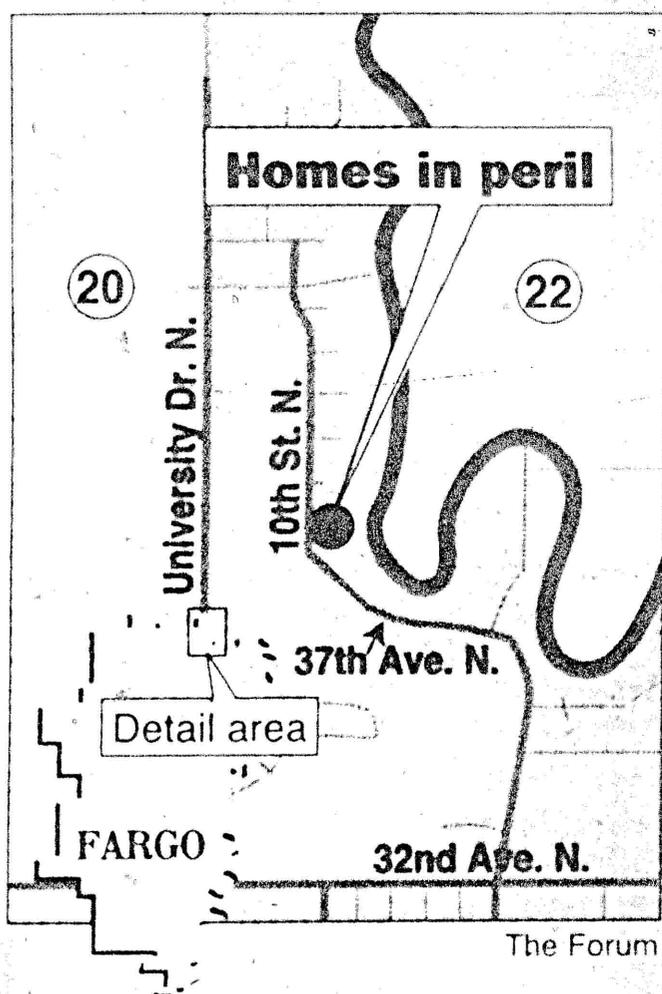
"It sounds like there are dollars available for transportation that we haven't been tapping into," said City Commissioner Arlette Preston.

The board agreed to check the effort's progress in six months.

Moorhead recently increased its Paratransit rates to \$2.

The City Commission also agreed to assist in a buyout of four homes along the 3700 block of 10th Street North. Their backyards are slumping into the Red River.

The city asked the state to return some Federal Emergency Management Agency funds Fargo had left



over from 1997 flood buyouts. The program requires a 15 percent local match to supplement 75 percent from FEMA and 10 percent from the state.

The City Commission agreed Monday that the city would pay half the local match — about \$36,000 — out of the storm sewer utility fund.

In other business, the board:

► Agreed to put \$200,000 into a pilot neighborhood rehabilitation project that would purchase two deteriorated houses, rehabilitate them and sell them to moderate-income families. Project participants are Fargo Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Home Builders Association and the Skills and Technology Training Center. Income from house sales will be used in 2001 to work on more houses.

► Voted to change existing 30- and 60-minute parking limits downtown to 90-minute zones. It will take up to two months to receive the signs and another week or two to install them.