



Regional Solicitation Policy Work Group Meeting Notes – April 23, 2021

Attendees:

James Hovland; Kevin Reich; Peter Dugan; Christopher Geisler; Deb Barber; Kris Fredson; Mathews Hollinshead; Frank Boyles; Julie Jeppson; Mary Giuliani Stephens; Jon Ulrich; Trista MatasCastillo; Stan Karwoski; Debbie Goettel

Staff Attendees:

Cole Hiniker; Jenna Ernst; Jon Solberg; Nick Thompson; Amy Vennewitz; Steve Peterson; Emily Jorgenson; Michael Thompson; Joe Barbeau; Elaine Koutsoukos; Sara Maaske; Lisa Freese; Adam Harrington; Peter Grafstrom; Jonathan Ehrlich; Angie Stenson

Notes:

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND MEETING OVERVIEW

Jim Hovland welcomed the group and went over the guidelines for how the group will operate. Cole Hiniker went over the schedule for the content of the six planned Work Group meetings.

2. HISTORY OF UNIQUE PROJECTS CATEGORY

Cole Hiniker described the history of unique projects in the Regional Solicitation and the recent Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) input on the topic.

More information was requested on the Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI) funding need from the Unique Projects pot of funding. This will be brought forward at a future meeting.

A question was asked about why Unique Projects are identified as short-term funding (2 years out). Hiniker noted this mostly is driven by TAB's desire to fund innovative projects and put this funding closer to the implementation timeline to be as nimble for new ideas as possible.

Several comments about new federal funding that may need to be considered by TAB in the future (e.g. stimulus or new federal bill) and could impact Unique Projects funding. A similar comment that this category evaluation framework could be used regardless of the funding amount, if more funding becomes available.

Other clarifying questions or comments were also made.

3. DISCUSSION OF UNIQUE PROJECTS PURPOSE, GOALS, AND OUTCOMES

Hiniker introduced the discussion and participants used MentiMeter to respond to a number of questions.



Question 1: What is your purpose for funding Unique Projects in the Regional Solicitation?

Fourteen participants submitted up to three responses each with the results shown below.



Members of the work group made comments about equity:

- Wanting to keep it in the forefront of the conversation
- Focus on racial disparities
- Equitable access means a lot of things, ability to pay, ability to get places
- Need for a common definition of equity

A comment was made about the purpose of Unique Projects being to fill in gaps in regional goals and outcomes that aren't already acknowledged in the Transportation Policy Plan, particularly technology improvements like smart roads, autonomous vehicles. Additionally, Metro Mobility improvements and shared mobility being a possible focus.

Question 2: What is your purpose for funding Unique Projects in the Regional Solicitation?

The participants submitted opened-ended responses with the results shown below.



| | | |
|--|---|---|
| # of people impacted | Regionalization | New ways to connect/Better conductivity Pilot for larger implementation |
| Learn from Development partnerships Success Citizen acceptance | -Regional impact vs Spot impact.-Spreading out the funding, lots of areas to support for equity and balance-Making sure good ideas don't go to waste due to a lack of fit with the Reg Sol framework. | Serving an aging society. Serving concentrated areas of poverty. Responding to climate change. |
| Proof of concept | repair or resolve prior projects unintended consequences which created diversity and inequities | What I already shared - not covered already- regional balance, technology improvements, shared mobility, like the idea of gaps in current policies |
| reduce fossil fuel use | Provide funding to projects which test a heretofore untested proposal. | reduce driving |
| reduce paving and pavement | Number of new jobs accessed | Reduced emissions |
| Reduce Racial disparities in transit while reducing impact to climate. | determine where our transportation system/infrastructure needs to be for the future, and the role this plays in serving all members of the community. | "15 minute city" — 15 minute walk for vital destinations for the most people |
| Increase access to a range of resources jobs, shopping, health care, arts and entertainment for everyone | reducing environmental impact with equity lens, increase opportunities to connect transit to final destination | Projects, innovative or otherwise, that help reduce impact of racial disparities and mitigate or reverse climate change |
| Improved connections to current transit system | Increase Equitable Use of transit system; eg: Protected bikeways vs. bikelanes | Inspiring innovative and collaborative solutions to urgent challenges we are facing on the ground. Ex. Growing new ridership, Improving riders' sense of safety, Eliminating our contributions to pollution in communities/neighborhoods most in need |
| Infrastructure that connects to a community | Encourage "disruptor" thinking in our transportation system. | ability to nimbly receive new fed funding opportunities |
| Increase Reliability and trust in transit system | Implementation of autonomous vehicles | access to timely/reliable and frequent transit to jobs, amenities, healthcare and home |
| fast chargers as ubiquitous as gas pumps | increase quality and use for people of all abilities | Solar trellis over parking lots, reduce heat and use the land for more than just asphalt. |
| Very general but: Right sizing transit/ Transportation infrastructure in a post COVID 19 world.. | should we invest in only level 1 charging stations or accelerating (in addition to MnDOT) the number of stations available. | anything that advances TAB system objectives in terms of utilizing information or energy |
| Investments that better connect/coordinate land use and transportation | | |

A comment was made to explain that disruptor technologies could be a focus and trying to create high-risk, high-reward and fund good ideas and innovation.

A comment was made that the group may want to consider funding studies that explore new ideas and a new smartphone app was used as an example.



A comment was made that there will be an important role for technical staff in evaluating proposals with several examples given from several members (cost benefit, who is impacted, barriers).

A comment was made that partnerships could be a key consideration in proposals, or level of collaboration.

A suggestion was made to use the University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies to help evaluate or identify innovative ideas.

A comment was made that this category is not necessarily about creating new ideas but expanding or increasing the implementation of existing ideas.

A comment about whether MnDOT expertise could be helpful at a future discussion.

Question 3: Any ideas for the types or specific projects you want to see as applications?

The participants submitted opened-ended responses with the results shown below.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Solar trellis over parking lots, use the land for more than just cars. | Funding studies on potentially innovative projects | Modification of charging stations to make them multi-use like for food trucks so they aren't running generators, to charge ebikes, or even cell phones for people waiting. |
| A successful replacement for Metro Mobility | Autonomous technology advances Road design infrastructure flexibility. Drones from a perspective of savings on roads use. | A study of service or goods "deserts" in the Metro and how eliminating them could facilitate transportation savings, mitigating climate change, improving individual health, etc. |
| Mobility hubs that reflect the community (social infrastructure) - can include community connections and climate resiliency features | Collaborative efforts that bring multiple cities, counties and Met Councilmembers can unite around and break down real or perceived divisions | |

A reminder comment was made to the group that there is no requirement to fund Unique Projects.

4. NEXT STEPS AND MEETING REFLECTION

The group reflected on the meeting format and acknowledged that additional commitment to monitoring the chat and hand-raising tools will be important at future meetings.

Several members appreciated the use of technology and engagement tools.