

DATE: July 23, 2014
TO: Metropolitan Council Members
FROM: Charles Carlson, Senior Manager BRT/Small Starts, Metro Transit
SUBJECT: TIP Amendment- Formula Funding for B Line Design

Metro Transit requested the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) pass a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendment to allocate \$1.4 million of Sec. 5307 transit formula funds for design and engineering of B Line arterial BRT transitway improvements along West 7th Street in St. Paul and in Bloomington. This is a technical, procedural action allowing Metro Transit to access its formula funds to advance design work in order to obligate funds prior to sunset dates for three past awards totaling \$18.6 million for the \$28 million B Line project.

Both St. Paul and Ramsey County have supported the B Line project over the past three years and have commended Metro Transit for its inclusive approach in developing and delivering arterial BRT projects. The county and city have also strongly supported Snelling Avenue and West 7th Street as the first arterial BRT corridors. As Ramsey County began Riverview study formulation in April 2013, city, county and Council staff have coordinated on the near term B Line and long term Riverview projects. Through May 2014, the parties have agreed the B Line would be the logical “no build” condition from which to evaluate Riverview corridor investments.

In May 2014, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) expressed new concerns that proceeding with B Line may negatively impact prospects for federal funding of a larger Riverview Corridor investment. The concerns were thought to be resolved through June Federal Transit Administration (FTA) consultations, but in July RCRRA staff requested the TIP amendment be withdrawn.

Under ordinary circumstances, Metro Transit might delay action to work through issues and return to TAB with uniform support. This was not possible in July because the online federal grants system is closing for a planned FTA system upgrade. FTA directed Metro Transit to submit any 2014 grants (preceded by any necessary TIP amendments) before the end of July, or funds will not be available until January 2015. This delay to design activities would result in a loss of project implementation funding.

At TAB on July 16, Ramsey County introduced a motion seconded by St. Paul to table the requested TIP amendment. The TAB’s role on these amendments is to confirm air quality conformity, Transportation Policy Plan inclusion, and fiscal constraint requirements. No questions were raised about these items. Metro Transit staff also emphasized the TIP amendment would not obligate the funds, and that any issues could be resolved prior to awarding funds in a design contract this fall. Following discussion, the TAB deferred to project-related concerns raised by city and county representatives and tabled the item.

Because TAB did not take action, the formula funds will not be available to Metro Transit for design work. The delayed design project will not meet funding sunsets, and the B Line project will lose \$18.6 million of secured funding. The largest component of these funds was awarded by TAB in May, reassigned from a Minneapolis arterial BRT corridor that was to follow B Line. Metro Transit continues to seek information and resolution to concerns raised by Ramsey County, and plans to return to TAB in September to propose a funding reallocation to other Metro Transit projects ready for implementation.

B Line (West 7th St) BRT Corridor Implementation

DRAFT 2014-2016 SCHEDULE & FUNDING SUNSET TIMING

	2014			2015			2016												
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
B LINE Design and Construction																			
Fed grant, RFP, and award design																			
Surveys and testing																			
30-50% design, environ. approvals																			
90% Design and bid documents																			
MnDOT approval (6 months)																			
Construction contract award																			
Funding Availability and Expiration																			
2015 CMAQ funding (buses)																			
2016 CMAQ funding (stations)																			
2015-2016 Ch. 152 TH Bonds																			

w/ July TIP

w/o July TIP

Order

Buses

Order

Buses

Funds

Expired

