

Revised 7/25/12

DRAFT REGIONAL SOLICITATION EVALUATION SCOPE OF WORK

Study Overview

The Regional Solicitation has been in place since 1993. Its main objective is to allocate federal transportation funds to a variety of locally-initiated projects that address transportation needs important to the project sponsor and help advance regional policies and priorities. A foundational value of the Regional Solicitation is that projects are selected in an objective, data-driven and performance-based manner.

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 and subsequent federal transportation acts have provided significant levels of federal funds to the region making a process to select projects necessary. The federal funds have been allocated in three major categories: Surface Transportation Program (STP) Urban Guarantee, Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Transportation Enhancement (TE). Since 1993 and approximately every two years thereafter, the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), with the assistance of its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) solicits, evaluates, ranks and recommends projects in those three categories for inclusion in the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). A fourth category, the Bridge Improvement Program was added to the solicitation in 2003.

The new 2-year federal Transportation Act, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, (MAP-21) of 2012 has introduced changes that may affect the Regional Solicitation.

The purpose of the study is to assess (a) the effectiveness of the Regional Solicitation in selecting projects that implement regional policies and investment priorities and (b) efficiency of the Regional Solicitation in requesting, evaluating, ranking and selecting project proposals in a fair and transparent way. The assessment must also factor in the changes to federal funding categories, funding levels and project eligibility included in MAP 21. The result will result in the identification of high level principles and specific opportunities for structural and procedural changes that would strengthen the process.

The TAB will consider the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study and make changes, as appropriate, to the process prior to the 2013 Regional Solicitation.

The TAB Executive Committee with the addition of the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Committee Chair will act as the Steering Committee for the study. The TAB Coordinator will be the study Project Manager with assistance from Council staff and a Project Management Team (PMT) . Meaningful participation from other policy makers and technical staff not included in the Steering Committee will be key to the success of the study.

The Regional Solicitation Evaluation is expected to be completed in a six month period from the date the Consultant receives the Notice to Proceed (NTP).

Work Tasks

Task 1. Review and Document the Work Plan and Schedule

The initial task of the Consultant will be to review, working with agency staff, the proposed work plan and schedule including the project leadership structure and jointly recommend any changes that may add significant value within the established budget. A final study work plan and schedule will be developed laying out a clear and detailed approach to the study that reflects the common understanding of the agency and consultant.

Deliverable: Final Study Work Plan and Schedule

Task 2. Obtain and Review History of Regional Solicitation

Staff will provide the consultant with background information on the history of the Regional Solicitation and changes in regional funding levels in various federal programs that may have affected the process . This will include:

- Current criteria and policies used for awarding regional federal funds
- A detailed description of the process used by the TAB and TAC to solicit, evaluate, rank, and recommend projects, including roles, responsibilities and timing
- A summary of key changes in criteria and policies introduced over time and the reasons that triggered those changes from 1993 to 2011
- A summary of Regional Solicitation results for 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2011, summarized by funding category, geographic area and mode.
- A preliminary evaluation of local project timing and completion conducted by a TAC Ad Hoc committee
- 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (November 2010)
- MnDOT Metro District 20-year Highway Improvement Plan 2011-2030
- Technical memoranda produced to date for the "A" Minor Arterial System Evaluation (2012) and any potential findings, conclusions and recommendations that are readily available
- A summary of changes introduced by the new 2012 federal Transportation Act (MAP-21)

The consultant will be expected to develop a good understanding of important changes in policy guidance included in the Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (adopted in 2010) and the Mn/DOT 2011-2030 Metro District Plan, particularly as they relate to setting programming priorities for the region. The influence of those policy changes on the development of high level

principles for the Regional Solicitation process needs to be examined thoroughly and may inform proposed structural and procedural changes to the process.

The consultant will also be expected to develop a good understanding of the implications of the changes introduced in the new 2-year federal Transportation Act passed by Congress in 2012, particularly as it relates to funding categories and funding eligibility, for the Regional Solicitation.

An "A" Minor Arterial Study lead by the Metropolitan Council, already underway, is expected to be completed by the end of 2012. This category of roads has received a large share of federal STP funds allocated through the Regional Solicitation over time.

The consultant is expected to review the technical memoranda, findings and conclusions on the "A" Minor Arterial system history, use and funding. Particularly relevant are the tasks in Part D of the "A" Minor Arterial Study, Funding the Region's Minor Arterial System and Evaluating the Regional Solicitation. The timing of the two studies will overlap to a certain extent but it is likely that the "A" Minor Arterial Study will be further ahead in its findings and conclusions. Therefore a strong coordination between the two studies will be essential to take advantage of work already produced and to avoid duplication of efforts.

The consultant will have access, as needed, to other relevant information such as minutes of TAB and TAC meetings, public hearing comments and other stakeholder correspondence related to the process.

Deliverable: Technical Memorandum 1 summarizing the history and evolution of the Regional Solicitation process, including changes in criteria, rules and practices as well as documenting the results of the process. The results of the Regional Solicitation for 2003 through 2011 will be summarized by funding category, mode and geographic area.

Task 3 Survey Stakeholders

This and the next two tasks are the basis for the basis for the evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Regional Solicitation. In Task 3, the consultant will survey a wide range of stakeholders: policy makers, project applicants, project scorers and technical staff. The purpose of the survey will be to elicit stakeholders perceptions and opinions on the effectiveness and efficiency of the process in addressing regional transportation needs and solicit suggestions to improve it.

Two important questions need to be address in terms of the effectiveness of the process:

- Is the process effective in helping achieve key regional goals and objectives and advancing regional investment priorities?

- How are changes in regional policy being recognized in the solicitation process? Are those changes properly incorporated in the process?

In terms of efficiency, the following question also needs to be addressed:

- Is the application, review, ranking and selection of projects carried out in an efficient manner without unnecessary efforts by applicants, technical staff and policy makers?

More specific questions to be addressed in this task include:

- Is the current process consistent and responsive to key regional policies and priorities such as system preservation, congestion management and promotion of alternatives to driving alone?
- Is the flexibility of the three main federal funding categories (i.e. STP, CMAQ and TE) to fund innovative multimodal projects fully used in the solicitation process to advance those important policy objectives? Is the new MAP 21 Act changing that flexibility?
- To what extent has the goal of establishing funding priorities based on an objective, data driven and performance based process has been achieved?
- Can the process be streamlined/simplified without major negative impacts?

The survey questions should not be limited to the mechanics of the process but should clearly address the policy analysis discussed in Task 4, Assess Consistency with Regional Policies and Priorities.

Proposals must contain specific information about the type of survey (e.g. mail-out/mail-back, telephone, face to face) to be conducted, the approximate number of surveys to be distributed/analyzed/summarized as well as a broad description of the format/content of the questionnaire/survey to be developed. An innovative and cost-effective survey approach will be an important element in the evaluation of the consultant proposal. The Consultant will be responsible, working with agency staff, for developing and administering the survey instrument and summarizing and analyzing the results.

Deliverable: Survey and Technical Memorandum 2 will summarize the survey and its results. The consultant will be responsible for designing and administering the survey instrument and collecting and summarizing the results. The project manager will be responsible for answering stakeholders questions regarding the survey.

Task 4. Assess consistency of process with regional policies and priorities

Working with agency staff and policy makers, the Consultant will evaluate the consistency of the solicitation process with current regional policies established in the 2030 Transportation

Policy Plan (TPP) adopted by the Metropolitan Council in 2010. The Consultant will also evaluate the effectiveness of the process in advancing regional priorities. Proven policy analysis, communication and facilitation capabilities will be essential in conducting Task 4.

The 2030 Transportation Policy Plan recognizes growing transportation system preservation needs and the importance of making them a top regional priority. It also emphasizes the need to optimize highway investments to move the largest number of people, manage congestion, invest in transit and encourage alternatives to driving alone.

Is the solicitation process helping implement this new policy direction? Are existing criteria recognizing this shift in regional policy and priorities?

Examples of specific issues to be addressed in the study include:

- Are growing basic needs such as highway preservation on "A" Minor Arterials and Non-Freeway Principal arterials and the replacement of the regional transit fleet being adequately addressed? Are Regional Solicitation funds appropriate for those purposes?
- Are congestion management tools such as Active Traffic Management (AM), lower-cost/high benefit projects and managed lanes given proper consideration?
- Is the process properly recognizing changing transit expansion needs and priorities identified in the Transportation Policy Plan and the Transit Regional Service Improvement Plan?

In order to address the above questions, the Consultant will facilitate a policy maker workshop with the Steering Committee and other key stakeholders, including Metropolitan Council members, using, among other tools, the results of the survey described in Task 3. A key outcome of this discussion will be the development of high-level principles for the solicitation process that can help improve its effectiveness in advancing regional policies and priorities. These high level principles could result in fundamental structural changes to the process.

The consultant will summarize the findings and conclusions of the policy workshop and further develop the high-level principles for inclusion in Task 6, Recommendation for Changes to the Regional Solicitation.

Deliverables: Policy Maker Workshop and Technical Memorandum 3. The consultant will coordinate the agenda and materials for the workshop in consultation with the project manager and agency staff and will facilitate the workshop. Technical memorandum 3 will summarize the policy analysis conducted in Task 4 and the findings and conclusions of the policy maker workshop, including:

- *Consistency of the current process with regional policies and effectiveness in advancing regional priorities.*
- *High-level principles to improve consistency with regional policies and priorities and guide the changes to the solicitation process*

Task 5. Assess Other Strengths and Weaknesses of the Process

Over the years, the Regional Solicitation has become a rigorous, data-driven process that requires a great deal of effort from applicants, project scorers, technical staff and policy makers. The purpose of this task is to assess the overall strengths and weaknesses of the procedures and mechanics of the process itself and explore possible changes to strengthen and streamline it.

Since its inception, the Regional Solicitation has funded many projects to improve the regional transportation system, particularly in the "A" Minor Arterial system, the transit system and pedestrian and bicycle facilities as well as the Transportation Management Organizations (TMO's). The consultant will evaluate how well the existing criteria and the performance measures submitted by project applicants predict anticipated outcomes (i.e. congestion reduction, crash reduction, ridership increases and continued service expansion, air quality, etc.). Are the methods used to develop data required from project applicants reliable and based on solid technical foundations? Are the right measurements being used? In this analysis, the consultant should take advantage of the virtual inventory and interviews performed for the "A" Minor Arterial Study and perform a similar evaluation for a limited number of projects in other project categories.

Up to four separate working sessions representing four separate stakeholder groups will be conducted with a selected number of policy makers, project applicants, project scorers and technical staff to address the aforementioned issues. A major input for those working sessions will be the portion of the survey discussed in Task 3 regarding the procedural aspects of the process. The composition of the appropriate working session participants and a detailed meeting agenda will be jointly developed by the consultant and staff.

This task will also include an evaluation of the process in terms of implementation success (i.e. projects completed, withdrawn, delayed, on time, on budget, etc.). An Ad Hoc Group of TAC members has been examining problems related to the delivery of projects selected for funding in the Regional Solicitation. Over the last five years, only 30 percent of the funded projects have been implemented in their program year. Possible obstacles to timely project implementation might include, among others, project scope changes, environmental and administrative review

requirements, sunset date rules and insufficient preliminary planning/engineering efforts. The Consultant will build upon the preliminary findings and conclusions of the Ad Hoc Group to identify obstacles and limitations of the process itself that would explain such a low level of implementation success. The Consultant should also address that some projects have been "advanced constructed" earlier than their program year with interim financing provided by the project sponsor.

Finally, the Consultant will also conduct a review of the process used by other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) in the nation to allocate federal STP, CMAQ and TE funds. At least six large MPO's, selected by agency staff with Consultant input, will be surveyed by the Consultant. The Consultant will analyze and summarize the results of the survey to develop relevant findings and conclusion that might help improve the Twin Cities process.

Deliverable: Up to four stakeholders work sessions and Technical Memorandum 4. The consultant will coordinate agendas and materials for the stakeholders work sessions in consultation with the project manager and will facilitate those sessions. Technical Memorandum 4 will include:

- *A summary of the visual inventory and interviews conducted as part of the "A" Minor Arterial Study and the results of the evaluation conducted for CMAQ and TE projects*
- *A summary of the working sessions with stakeholders*
- *The results of the criteria evaluation including proposals for potential improvements in supporting project application measurements and*
- *Proposed changes in the process to improve implementation success*
- *Findings and conclusions of the peer review conducted with other MPO's*

Task 6. Develop Recommendations for Changes to the Regional Solicitation

Based upon the findings and conclusions developed in the previous tasks, the Consultant will develop draft recommendations to improve the Regional Solicitation. The draft recommendations may include, among others, changes to:

- High level policy principles guiding the solicitation process
- Qualifying and priority criteria
- Number and types of project categories
- Timing of projects funded through the solicitation process
- Project application format
- Project application review and ranking process
- Program of projects development and adoption by policy makers
- Timelines and implementation rules and

- Any other relevant aspects of the process.

Preliminary recommendations developed by the Consultant in conjunction with agency staff will be presented to the study Steering Committee for their review, discussion and feedback. This step will provide the consultant policy direction prior to proposing final recommendations.

Deliverable: Technical Memorandum 5 identifying proposed recommendations to the TAB for potential changes to the Regional Solicitation to:

- *Improve the process effectiveness in advancing regional goals and objectives and*
- *Improve the process efficiency in selecting a program of projects to be funded with STP, CMAQ and TE funds*

The Consultant will provide a minimum of two drafts and a final document for Technical Memorandum 5. The first draft will include recommendation concepts for discussion with the Project Management Team. The second draft will include detailed recommendations developed based on the Project Management Team direction and will be discussed with the Steering Committee. The final Technical Memorandum 5 will follow those discussions.

Task 7. Provide support in soliciting input and disseminating results

Transparency is a key objective of the Regional Solicitation Evaluation. Outreach and stakeholder communications are, therefore, critical to study success. The study will be guided by policy makers and technical staff. This will be done through a Steering Committee, a Project Management Team and a study Web site. Opportunities for input from other stakeholders will be provided as the study progresses.

The study Steering Committee will include the members of the TAB Executive Committee and the Chair of the Transportation Committee of the Metropolitan Council. The Steering Committee will meet at least four times to conduct a high level policy discussion on consistency with regional policy and provide policy guidance in the preparation of the technical memoranda. The final version of Technical Memorandum 5 will be presented to the TAB and the Metropolitan Council upon conclusion of the study. The Consultant will be expected to attend and participate at all of these meetings.

The Project Management Team (PMT) will consist of the TAB Coordinator, primary consulting staff, staff from the Metropolitan Council (2) and MnDOT Metro District (1), a local representative and other agency staff, as needed. The PMT will meet at least monthly during the duration of the study and will be the primary forum for initial review, task assignment and updates and progress discussion.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the TAB will provide review and feedback, as needed, on study deliverables including through its Funding and Programming Committee. Consultant attendance and participation at those briefings is also expected.

The Consultant will work with the project manager and other agency staff, as needed, to develop and support a password-protected study Web site. The Consultant should state in its proposal whether it recommends working with Metropolitan Council staff to implement and support the site on the Council's Sharepoint platform or if it recommends and will support the site itself on another platform. Access to the site will be provided to the Steering Committee, TAC (including its Funding and Programming Committee), and the Project Management Team. The site will include all materials developed for the study, including a calendar of and summaries from study-related meetings.

The Consultant will attend, facilitate and participate in the four working sessions with project applicants, project scorers, technical staff and policy makers to review and discuss the stakeholders surveys described in Task 3.

The study final report will be presented to the TAC, the TAB and the Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee. The TAC and TAB meet monthly and the Transportation Committee meets twice monthly.

Deliverables: Agency staff will coordinate and schedule the TAC and Steering Committee meetings to be supported by technical material generated by the Consultant. The Consultant will (a) compile notes and action items from those meetings (formal meeting minutes are not envisaged as a deliverable), (b) coordinate the Project Management Team meetings, agendas and deliverables in consultation with the agency Project Manager and (c) develop and support the study Web site. The consultant should include all identified meetings and Web site development and support in the budget and 6-month schedule it proposes.

All supporting electronic files, graphics, and map documents will be delivered to the Metropolitan Council on CD or DVD-ROM format. Supporting files should include sub-deliverable components such as ArcGIS layers, Excel spreadsheet, Word document, Powerpoint presentation, and image and graphic files.