

2026 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Regionally Funded Transportation Planning in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area

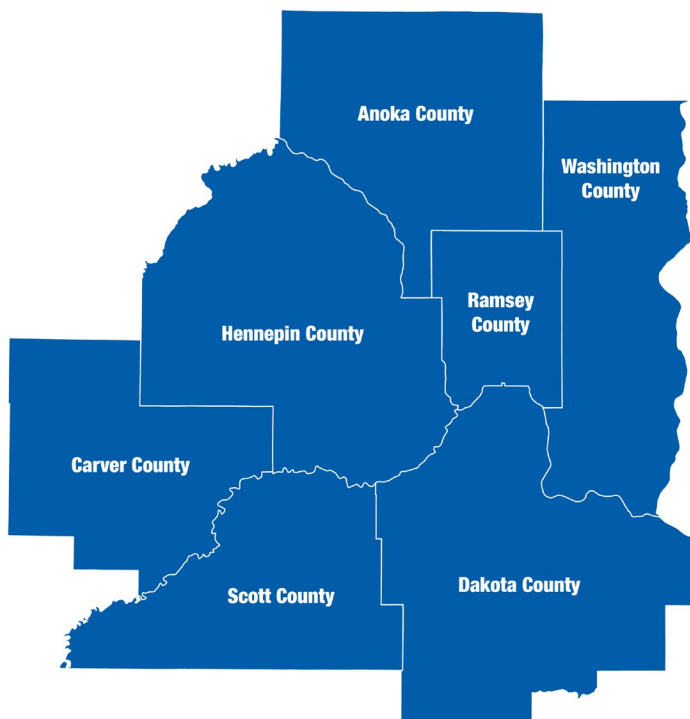


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COUNCIL

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The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Met Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

On request, this publication will be made available in alternative formats to people with disabilities. Call Metropolitan Council information at 651-602-1140 or TTY 651-291-0904.

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Introduction

The Metropolitan Council serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Twin Cities region and facilitates the cooperative, continuing, and comprehensive (3-C) transportation planning process for the region. The Metropolitan Council’s jurisdiction includes the seven counties surrounding the core cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, including Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties. In addition, the 2020 Census continues to identify developed areas of Wright and Sherburne counties, primarily along the I-94 and U.S. Highway 10 corridors, to also be included in the urbanized area (UZA) for transportation planning purposes, though these areas are not otherwise part of the Metropolitan Council’s jurisdiction.

The Regional Transportation Planning Work Program is a description and documentation of transportation and transportation-related planning activities in the Twin Cities metropolitan area for calendar year 2026 that are funded by local sources and grants, not federal planning funds. These activities, when paired with the federally funded planning activities, help ensure the efficient operation of the region’s transportation system and advance the mission of the Met Council and the values, vision, and goals of Imagine 2050 and the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan.

Historically, these activities have been included in the federally funded Unified Planning Work Program to demonstrate the whole body of work produced by the Council’s regional transportation planning department. However, some regional priorities may not align with current federal policy or funding eligibility. The Met Council remains committed to shared regional and state goals, and those activities described in this document continue to be funded with non-federal sources.

Regional Transportation Planning Tasks Funding

The Regional Transportation Planning Work Program is funded through a variety of regional funding sources including Metropolitan Airports Commission funds for aviation planning, federal funds for Travel Demand Management Program activities awarded as part of the TDM Regional Solicitation project, Council sales tax funds for the Midtown Greenway project and other Council funds for non-federally eligible planning activities.

Figure 1: 2026 Regional Work Program Budget Sources



Regionally Funded Transportation Planning Tasks

Task 1: Right-of-Way Acquisition Loan Fund

Purpose

To administer the [Right-of-Way Acquisition Loan Fund](#) (RALF), established by the Minnesota legislature in 1982, to give loans to cities and counties for the advance acquisition of property located within an officially mapped metropolitan highway right-of-way.

Activities

Administration

- Council staff consults with interested cities and MnDOT to determine the eligibility of specific parcels for RALF loans, prepares reviews of RALF loan applications for Council approval, and if approved, processes loan documents and check requisitions.
- Staff processes loan repayments after the property is sold to the road building authority, which is generally MnDOT.
- Staff works with loan holders on sale and repayment related to parcels determined not to be needed for highway purposes.
- Staff reports to the Council on the status of the RALF program and the available balance in the revolving loan fund each year.
- The Council originally levied a property tax to fund this program, but loan repayments made into the revolving fund when the highway is constructed have been sufficient to support the program for many years without the need for an annual levy.

Major Products

Product	Completion Date
Process loan applications and repayments	As needed

Task 2: Aviation Transportation Planning

Purpose

To maintain the long-term viability of the regional aviation system by ensuring compatible land use planning, development, system efficiency, and project effectiveness; to develop and implement long-range regional aviation policy, monitor and periodically review and update the Aviation System Plan, which is included in the TPP; and to ensure that airport plans are consistent with regional policies and current and anticipated technical, economic, and political conditions.

Other aviation planning activities include reviewing and coordinating aviation planning activities among agencies and municipalities. The Council is the lead agency on regional airport system planning and works closely with the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), who owns and operates most of the region's public airports, and MnDOT Office of Aeronautics for statewide air system planning and airport project funding, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for federal regulations, and funding.. Other cities and agencies participate in the Council's aviation planning activities through the Council's TAC/TAB process and special working groups.

Activities

Aviation Planning Coordination

- Coordinate activities with MnDOT Aeronautics, Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), FAA, other airport sponsors, communities, and users on the various regional aviation activities.
- Review airport annual capital improvement programs and land use (noise, safety, and infrastructure) compatibility planning.
- Attend and provide support for MAC meetings at regional airports. Develop monthly status updates for MAC Council Member liaison.

Aviation System Planning

- Continue an aviation system planning program including an aviation database, identification of needs, and evaluation of system performance.
- Include ongoing reviews of the aviation elements of local comprehensive plans and comprehensive plan amendments.
- Review and approve the St Paul Downtown Airport Long-Term Comprehensive Plan preparation.
- Adopt the 2050 TPP Aviation System Plan with updated technical analysis, policy review and public comment.

Major Products

Product	Completion Date
Review of Local Plan Amendments and EAs for Aviation	Ongoing
Review MAC's Capital Improvement Program	Q1 2026
Amend 2050 TPP Aviation System Plan	Q1 2026
Consistency Review for the Long-Term Comprehensive Plan for St. Paul Downtown Airport	Q3 2026

Task 3: Travel Demand Management Program

Purpose

To manage aspects of the regional travel demand management (TDM) program that relate to multiple implementing partners to help facilitate a regional TDM program so that implementors are working in a coordinated, collaborative manner; and to build a regional TDM work plan and budget that includes creating technical capacity and tools for implementors, providing frameworks for consistent strategy implementation, and monitoring performance for potential program enhancements.

The activities in this task are ongoing but will also include oversight of specific projects every year, some of which may be reflected in other tasks within the CPG-funding tasks if they are eligible planning projects.

Activities

Travel Demand Management Program Coordination

- Administer TDM advisory and technical groups, including creating agendas, meetings summaries, and providing content when needed.
- Maintain a regional TDM workplan and collect consistent workplan information and progress reporting from regional TDM partners.
- Provide support to MnDOT’s I-494 INFRA grant that includes TDM elements in conjunction with highway investment.
- Offer assistance to regional TDM partners on industry best practices and foster collaboration for regional TDM projects.

Travel Demand Management Program Administration

- Identify available data sources or research tools that could support TDM performance measures to be included in regional TDM program and projects.
- Continue to work on creating a consistent, public and stakeholder facing brand and website for the regional TDM program (including the promotion of events such as International Car Free Day, Bike to Work Day, National Walk to Work Day, etc.) that also connects to TDM implementation and service provider partner websites.
- Provide TDM partners with tools that capture data that will be used for regional analysis.

Major Products

Product	Completion Date
Public-facing brand and website creation	Q2 2026

Task 4: Other Regionally Funded Planning Studies

Purpose

The Metropolitan Council has planning activities funded throughout the agency that support the goals established in Imagine 2050 the regional development guide. The activities in this work area are components of the work performed by the MPO, but federal planning (CPG) dollars are not used. These activities are included as part of the narrative of the whole body of transportation planning work that the department produces. The Council has been involved in this work for several decades and this work relates to the efficient operation of the region’s transportation system.

Activities

Consultant Studies

This task includes the following consultant studies:

- Community Considerations and Equity Framework & Tool Training
- Electric Vehicle Public Charging Analysis
- Electric Vehicle Public Engagement & City Support
- Midtown Greenway Bicycle & Pedestrian Trail Expansion Planning Project
- 2050 Comprehensive Planning Technical Assistance

Study descriptions are shown in Appendix A at the end of this document.

Major Products

Product	Completion Date
Community Considerations and Equity Framework & Tool Training	Q3 2026
Electric Vehicle Public Charging Analysis	Q3 2026
Electric Vehicle Public Engagement & City Support	Q4 2027
Midtown Greenway Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Expansion Planning Project	Q1 2026
2050 Comprehensive Planning Technical Assistance	Q4 2026

APPENDIX A. REGIONALLY FUNDED PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS



COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS AND EQUITY FRAMEWORK & TOOL TRAINING

Project Overview

This project focuses on best practices for community engagement and understanding community data to identify transportation needs and developing community support and understanding of potential projects. It also seeks to implement lessons learned from the recently completed Equity Evaluation of Regional Transportation Investment Processes project regarding community engagement and the need to engage and involve representatives from overburdened communities in project identification, development and decision making. This training is primarily for local partners on the use and application of the Equity Framework and Tool at the project purpose and need phase and also will assist Regional Solicitation applicants in understanding expectations and what constitutes good community engagement and involvement for the community considerations criteria.

Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Develop training plan and schedule
- Deliver training sessions
- Review session evaluations and implement any needed changes for future training

Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

Estimated Project Dates: Q4 2023 – Q3 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$100,000	\$50,000

Staff Contact

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ELECTRIC VEHICLE PUBLIC CHARGING ANALYSIS

Project Overview

The 2021-2022 study, [A Path to Accelerate Electric Vehicle Adoption in the Twin Cities](#), included an analysis of public charging needs at an aggregate level at various levels of electric vehicle market share. This technical analysis will extend that work to consider the more detailed ecosystem of public charging needed if the region is to accommodate and accelerate light-duty electric vehicle adoption. **The study results will identify and prioritize remaining gaps in charging infrastructure investment needs beyond what exists and the investments anticipated from utilities, the private sector, and available federal funding.**

Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Identify the existing charging network and additional investments expected from utilities, the private sector and public investments using available funding.
- Identify ranges of expected charging needs under differing adoption rates for electric vehicles in the region.
- Geographically describe various gaps in the charging system that we might anticipate in the Twin Cities region and an efficient mix of charging investments that might fill that gap.
- Identify any known or expected issues and investment needs for the regional energy transmission network.
- Identify criteria and measures to prioritize public funding for charging network gaps.

Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

Estimated Project Dates: Q2 2025 – Q3 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$175,000	\$75,000

Staff Contact

Staff Contact: Tony Fischer

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ELECTRIC VEHICLE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & CITY SUPPORT

Project Overview

Individuals and cities will play a central role in determining how fast the benefits of transportation electrification are realized. **This work will develop and provide the information these important stakeholders need to make decisions related to charging infrastructure and electric vehicles and accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles.**

Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Review available public engagement materials and develop materials to fill in needs that are not yet addressed.
 - Develop a public engagement plan, address stakeholder feedback, and implement the plan.
 - Collect and report metrics describing outcomes of public engagement.
 - Review city technical support materials and develop materials to fill in needs that are not yet addressed.
 - Develop a city technical support plan, address stakeholder feedback and implement the plan.
 - Collect and report metrics describing outcomes of city technical support.
-

Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026 ☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

Estimated Project Dates: Q4 2025 – Q4 2027

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$300,000 - \$400,000	\$100,000

Staff Contact

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MIDTOWN GREENWAY BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN TRAIL EXPANSION PLANNING STUDY

Project Overview

This project is in response to the 2023 Omnibus Transportation Finance Bill that **directed the Council to plan a continuous and dedicated bicycle/pedestrian trail from the eastern terminus of the current Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis across the Mississippi River and terminating at Allianz Field in St. Paul and to include a trail connection to the University of Minnesota Main Campus**. The purpose of the project is to develop a conceptual plan for extending the Greenway and to advance it into project development planning. The Final Report will include a Project Implementation Plan that lays out the processes and detailed steps to complete design and construct the project.

Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Identify alignment options to extend the Midtown Greenway across the Mississippi River and into St. Paul.
- Provide a project implementation plan.

Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

Estimated Project Dates: Q1 2026 – Q4 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$540,000	\$87,000

Staff Contact

Staff Contact: Steve Elmer

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2050 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Project Overview

This project will develop technical assistance materials to support cities, townships, and counties in developing their comprehensive plan updates to meet or be consistent with the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan. This technical assistance will include materials like policy fact sheets, guides, workshops or training videos, technical resources like spreadsheet tools, and other support. The Council is working with local partners to identify the specific topics that will benefit from technical assistance and Council staff will then assess which topics need consultant support. This effort may be funded through multiple contracts, depending on identified topics.

Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Assess technical assistance needs and determine which are high priority that will require consultant support.
- Hire consultant(s) to develop roughly three to six technical assistance materials based on prioritized list.

Schedule & Budget

☐ Project Initiated Before 2026

☒ Project to be Initiated in 2026

Estimated Project Dates: Q1 2026 – Q4 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$25,000	\$25,000

Staff Contact

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