

Minutes

Transportation Advisory Board



Meeting date: August 20, 2025,

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

Chair, James Hovland
1st Vice Chair, Debbie Goettel
2nd Vice Chair, Victor Lake
~~Doug Anderson~~
~~Myron Bailey~~
Deb Barber
~~Husniyah Bradley~~ (Andy Lewis)
Aurin Chowdhury
~~Carl Grimmins~~
~~Don De~~
~~Peter Dugan~~ (Rachel Chinitz)
~~Amity Foster~~ (Timothy Marino)
~~Torin Gustafson~~

Gary Hansen
Mary Liz Holberg
Taylor Hubbard
Julie Jeppson
~~Glen Johnson~~ (Brandon Wagenfeld)
Saura Jost
Stan Karwoski
~~Frank Kohlasch~~ (Amanda Smith)
William Lindeke
~~John Morast~~
Brian Martinson
Becky Petryk

~~Jess Robertson~~
Khani Sahebjam
~~George Schember~~
Mark Steffenson
Jon Ulrich
Christopher Vaughan
Jeffery Weisensel
Tom Workman
Mai Chong Xiong

Staff

Elaine Koutsoukos, TAB
Joe MacPherson, TAC
Charles Carlson, MTS Director

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Metropolitan Council acknowledges that the land we currently call Minnesota and specifically the seven-county region is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota Oyate who are present and active contributors to our thriving region. As part of the Metropolitan Council's commitment to address the unresolved legacy of genocide, dispossession, and settler colonialism and the fact that government institutions, including the Metropolitan Council, benefitted economically, politically, and institutionally after the forceable removal of the Dakota Oyate, the Metropolitan Council is dedicated to instilling Land, Water, and People Commitments in regional policy. These commitments support the Dakota Oyate, the eleven federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota, Ho-Chunk Nation, and the American Indian Communities representing over 150 diverse Tribal Nations that call the seven-county region home.

Call to order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Hovland called the regular meeting of the Transportation Advisory Board to order at 12:35 p.m.

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

Chair Hovland said a presentation will be coming in October and further discussions about how TAB will implement the Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgement will follow.

Agenda approved

It was moved by Goettel, seconded by Xiong to approve the agenda. Committee members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

Reports

TAB Chair's Report – Jim Hovland

Jim Hovland reported on the August 20th TAB executive committee meeting.

Agency Reports – MnDOT, MPCA, MAC, and Metropolitan Council

MnDOT

Sahebjam reported that in the metro area, as of July 30, there were 83 fatalities (40% of the fatalities in the state); of which 14 were pedestrian, 12 motorcycles (34% of statewide), and a couple bicycle. As of August 20, there were 219 fatalities in the state, compared to 274 in 2024 at the same time; of which 23 were pedestrian, 37 motorcycle, 8 bicycle, and 5 ATV. The Minnesota Highway Freight Program solicitation ends on September 3. The federal IIJA ends September 30, 2026. The federal government and Congress are working on the next bill. Construction will be winding down for the year.

MPCA

Smith reported that the VW Settlement program has an open grant for freight switch locomotive replacements until October 22. A Request for Proposals for EV Fast Chargers will open soon. We have been experiencing issues with air quality over the past few months. The air quality alerts are higher because of Canadian fires. EPA has an open comment period related to rolling back vehicle emission standards for Green House Gases. MPCA will be at the State Fair at Eco Experience

MAC

No Report from MAC

Metropolitan Council

Barber updated on Metro Microtransit pilot in North Minneapolis and Roseville, ridership increased from 200 rides in Jan to 1,500 in July. Service launched in Bloomington last weekend August 16th and will be expanding to Blaine in September.

Suburban Transit Association

Hansen reported suburban transit providers report express/fixed route ridership increases of up to 26% and microtransit increases of up to 40% year-over-year. SouthWest Transit's airport route ridership has doubled since launching in April. Minnesota Valley Transit Authority Connect service is averaging nearly 600 rides daily.

The Maple Grove Transit and Plymouth Metrolink joint transit needs assessment study is expected to result in implementation of service changes around year-end, including additional express and microtransit service.

MVTA and Southwest Transit will provide service to all 12 days of the Minnesota State Fair. They are also offering weekend service to the Renaissance Festival. See mvta.com and swtransit.org for details

TAC Report – Joe MacPherson, TAC Chair

Joe MacPherson reported on the August 6th TAC meeting.

Approval of minutes

It was moved Hansen, seconded by Karwoski, to approve minutes of the July 16, 2025, regular meeting of the Transportation Advisory Board. **Motion carried.**

Non-consent business

1. 2025-20: Corridors of Commerce Readiness Recommendation

Joe MacPherson presented. Karwoski asked if counties were limited to two submittals each and, if the Met Council submits a third for that county, what prevents any of the seven counties from submitting more than two and relying on the Met Council to support the extra project. MacPherson clarified that the Met Council is allowed to support up to two projects, the same as a county. He explained that if two counties each submitted three projects, the Met Council could choose to support two of those additional projects, but no more.

It was moved by Jeppson, seconded by Xiong, that the Transportation Advisory Committee recommend that the Metropolitan Council recommend the City of Anoka's Highway 47/BNSF Railway Crossing Project to MnDOT for scoring consideration in the Corridors of Commerce Readiness Advancement solicitation. **Motion carried.**

2. 2025-18: Scope Change: MVTA

Hovland asked if every application in the transit modernization category was funded and confirmed that the project in question would have been funded in its modified form had it been submitted that way originally.

MacPherson confirmed this was correct, noting that all applications in the transit modernization category were funded.

Hovland raised another point: since \$120,000 would remain if the modified form were approved, one option would be to leave the extra funds with the applicant with no reduction in federal funds, while another option would be to approve the scope change and reduce federal funds so that \$120,000 would return to the region. He asked if this was a valid option.

MacPherson responded that while it was not as straightforward, this option was possible. The applicant's request would allow either withholding or removing about \$120,000, depending on the approach. A modified proposed action could approve the scope change while reducing the funding amount by \$120,000, a number discussed at TAC and at Funding and Programming.

Hovland confirmed that both advisory boards recommended no reduction in federal funds. He added that some Technical Advisory Committee members noted transit is "its own animal" and while this was a significant scope change, it was warranted since it targeted areas with the greatest ridership.

MacPherson compared the case to a previous project involving sidewalk construction where a scope change reduced the project from 13 miles to 2 miles, while keeping the funding. That case prompted lengthy discussions across committees, like this one.

Hansen stated that the change allows MVTA to adjust implementation while maintaining the original goal of enhancing accessibility and modernizing technology. He emphasized that this was not a new project but a reprioritization due to electrical infrastructure costs and technology limitations. The changes would target higher-priority facilities, particularly supporting microtransit services experiencing strong ridership growth.

Lindke asked for more detail about reduced service patterns at original project locations, noting a lack of accessible ridership data on MVTA's website. He wanted specifics on which routes had been cut, reduced, or might return post-pandemic.

Matt Fyten, MVTA Development Officer, explained that the changes primarily impacted routes serving the Heart of the City Park area near Burnsville Transit Station. Due to reinvestment in microtransit, some local services were reduced, driving the need to redirect funds.

Lindke acknowledged this but expressed broader concern about the future of suburban fixed-route services post-COVID. He asked whether MVTA viewed fixed routes as a long-term priority, citing their importance in other cities.

Fyten responded that while local ridership declined after a 15% cut in local service, MVTA saw net increases through microtransit. He emphasized the balance between maintaining

fixed route “lifeline” services for accessibility and efficiency, while meeting demand for local trips via microtransit.

Jeppson expressed concern that significant electrical infrastructure costs and technology limitations two reasons for the scope change should have been known at the time of application. She noted Minnesota winters, and infrastructure needs are predictable but deferred to TAC’s judgment in recommending approval.

Martinson expanded on concerns, observing that shifting resources from fixed routes to microtransit may have long-term consequences. He argued that while microtransit fills a need, it lacks economies of scale: each rider costs the same, unlike fixed routes where additional riders lower per-rider costs. He warned against cannibalizing fixed-route systems to support a potentially unscalable microtransit model.

Ulrich suggested that autonomous vehicles and AI-driven efficient routing could change the balance in the future.

Barber noted that zones were chosen based on high-frequency transit centers, which are still being developed in suburban areas where needs differ from urban cores.

Marino emphasized the need for greater collaboration between local services and larger fixed transit routes. He also pointed out that funding sources for enhancements arrive at different times, leading to staggered investments.

It was moved by Hansen, seconded by Ulrich, that the Transportation Advisory Board approve a scope change request to replace technology and ADA improvements at 53 bus stops/shelters and four MVRTA transit hubs with enhanced improvements to eight transit facilities in MVRTA’s technology and ADA enhancements project with no reduction in federal funds. **Motion carried.**

3. 2025-19: 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program

Xiong asked how the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) reflects performance measures adopted by TAB and included in the new Met Council Imagine 2050 plan.

Molly McCartney, MnDOT, explained that the TIP is part of the statewide transportation improvement program. She noted that the Met Council’s TIP embodies federal transportation dollars from MnDOT and other sources. She said projects are evaluated using pavement condition, bridge condition, and safety measures, ensuring consistency with the statewide multimodal transportation plan.

Charles Carlson, Executive Director for MTS, stated that performance measures are adopted and used to guide project selection. While not every project directly aligns with each measure, there is a clear link between investments and the region’s performance goals. He explained that about 3% of overall transportation funds are allocated through the regional solicitation process, where TAB explicitly prioritizes regional goals. He noted that a new safety category was recently added to better address fatality-reduction targets.

MacPherson added that Council staff and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) have considered conducting “before and after” studies to measure outcomes. He suggested evaluating completed projects such as roadway, bike, and transit investments to determine whether they achieved regional goals.

Xiong asked if those evaluations are already being conducted. MacPherson confirmed that some work has been done and referenced Steve Peterson, who has overseen such studies. Steve Peterson reported that three “before and after” studies on solicitation projects have been completed. The results showed that MnDOT’s Highway Safety Improvement Program delivered the most significant safety outcomes. He said the studies informed the Council’s current focus on prioritizing safety in project selection. Xiong acknowledged the studies but stressed that the region still falls short of its stated goals. MacPherson agreed and said the ongoing regional solicitation revamp aims to better align funding with Imagine 2050 goals. Xiong reiterated that the TIP represents only a small percentage of overall infrastructure



funding and encouraged stronger alignment with regional goals. Chris Vaughan asked if there has been any long-range analysis of projects, such as return on investment (ROI) for asset management. MacPherson responded that ROI and cost participation are considered during project development, including long-term maintenance and upkeep. He noted that both the state and Met Council use lane-mile and centerline-mile data to guide future budget needs and revenue requests.

Marino pointed to page 864 of the document, noting a \$3.5 million line item for the C Line arterial bus rapid transit project, which opened in 2019, and asked why it was included.

Charles Carlson explained that the funding likely supports construction of permanent stations on Highway 55. The initial project had temporary stations in place, and this phase would upgrade them to full standard shelters.

Lindeke remarked that only eight public comments were submitted on the TIP and questioned whether enough resources had been dedicated to engagement, especially considering the size of the metro population.

Charles Carlson responded that greater public input occurs during the regional transportation planning process, such as during adoption of the Imagine 2050 plan. He said while the TIP is important, it is less of a “kitchen table” issue than broader planning documents.

It was moved by Tom Workman, seconded by Becky Petryk, that the Transportation Advisory Board: 1. Accept the attached 2026-2029 TIP Public Comment Report and 2. Recommend that TAB recommend adoption of the draft 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). **Motion carried.**

4. 2025-26: TPP Aviation System Plan Update Release for Public Comment Aviation System Plan

Xiong asked how the region is utilizing plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Joe Widing responded that efforts are being guided by the Metropolitan Airports Commission's Sustainable Aviation Fuel Hub.

It was moved by Goettel, seconded by Martinson, that the Transportation Advisory Board Recommend that the Metropolitan Council release the draft 2050 TPP Amendment 2: Aviation System Plan Update for public review and comment. **Motion carried.**

5. 2025-27: 2026 Unified Planning Work Program

Wagenfeld noted that the schedule listed Q4 2024 and Q4 2025 and asked when the Greenway Study would be completed. Cole Hiniker explained that the Greenway Study kicked off in late 2024 but is included in the UPWP (Unified Planning Work Program) because projects must be identified to spend federal dollars.

Amy Vennewitz provided an update on the Highway Harms Special Issue Working Group. She stated that the primary level of engagement is with community-based organizations.

It was moved by Steffenson, seconded by Choudry, that the Transportation Advisory Board recommend adoption of the attached 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Motion carried.

6. 2025-28: Program Year Extension: St. Paul Arlington Avenue Sidewalk Infill Joe MacPherson presented. It was moved by Goettel, seconded by Xiong, that the Transportation Advisory Board approve Saint Paul's Program year extension request to move its Arlington Avenue sidewalk project from 2026 to 2027 **Motion carried**

Information

1. Mobility Improvements

Charles Carlson, MTS Executive Director and Matt Fyten, MVTA, presented. Lindeke asked

whether demographic data is being collected. Fyten responded that microtransit is most frequently used by transit-dependent individuals. He noted that low-income riders, women, and seniors represent the largest user groups.

Taylor Hubbard stated that microtransit fills a different need than fixed bus routes. She added that it is especially valuable in suburban areas and can help identify where fixed bus routes might be updated to expand service into rural parts of the county.

Mary Liz Holberg asked if ridership numbers include special events such as the Minnesota State Fair or the Renaissance Festival. Fyten clarified that the numbers only reflect microtransit ridership. They added that microtransit helps riders connect to larger transit hubs, where they can then access services to reach special events.

Marino inquired about the use of subsidies within different microtransit networks, as well as the rejection rate and the percentage of time vehicles are in use. Fyten explained that some of this data is collected at the provider level.

Barber noted that because these systems are new, more time is needed before apples-to-apples comparisons across service networks can be made.

Hansen asked whether electric vehicles are being used in microtransit networks.

Andy Lewis asked why fare structures differ between providers. Fyten explained that each provider determines its own fare structure. At the regional level, fare structures are still in development. Guidelines and policies must be established before implementation, but the intent is to ensure systems remain interoperable so that riders can transfer between them. Fyten, also stated that MVTA collects user data through onboard surveys.

2. Minnesota Go Vision Update

Whitney Mason, MnDOT, presented this item. TAB members were requested to provide input and share the link to the full survey, [Phase 1 Public Engagement Survey | Let's Talk Transportation - MnDOT](#).

3. Regional Solicitation Evaluation Update

Hovland provided an update on the Policymaker Work Group meeting. There was discussion on how to allocate funding based on an outcome-based approach; whether to have ranges for each category or not. The hope that they gave the technical committees some direction for discussion

Martinson provided an update on the Active Transportation Work Group. The next meeting is scheduled for August 25. The work group will discuss funding considerations including the percentage of local match, project minimums and maximums, how much of the sales tax funding collected to allocate in 2026, and a policy to determine how much funding to hold in reserve. The first Active Transportation project selected in 2024 has been completed. A ribbon-cutting will be held in Jordan on August 27 at 3:00 pm

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

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