Regional Solicitation Unique Projects Development Process
What is the Regional Solicitation?

Regional process to allocate federal transportation funds to locally-initiated projects that support regional transportation goals and objectives.

• Solicit and select projects every two years for implementation four-to-five years into the future (e.g., 2020 Regional Solicitation will fund projects in 2024 and 2025)
• Use a transparent and technically-driven scoring system to select projects
• Federal awards pay up to 80% of total project cost or adopted maximum awards
Strong Linkage to Regional Policy

- Qualifying criteria ask applicants to document consistency with regional policy
- Geographic balance is a secondary lens
2018 Regional Solicitation Feedback

How do we accommodate the potential influx of interest related to technology and shared mobility?

• Unique Projects:
  – Formalize the category with a set-aside of funding?
  – How to score?
  – TAB directed staff to create a framework for Unique Projects

• Rethinking the Travel Demand Management category?

• Shared mobility / CAV / new technologies

• Policy-level input needed
Unique Projects History

- Prior to 2014, unique projects funded on a case-by-case basis
- Unique projects application category suggested to be added during 2014 Regional Solicitation evaluation (for 2016 application)
- Interest from TAB in providing flexibility to respond to Unique project requests
  - Reviewing requests during Regional Solicitation timeline allows for consideration during creation of funding options
Regional Solicitation Policymaker Work Group – Met throughout 2019

- TAB Chair and Vice Chair
- City of Minneapolis
- Transit and Bike-Ped reps
- Suburban provider rep
- Two Met Council Members
- Three county reps
Policymaker Work Group Recommendation

- Create a Unique Projects application category
- Set aside 2.5% of total funding in 2020 Solicitation for Unique projects
- Select Unique projects in the 2022 Solicitation
- Identify the Unique Projects criteria and evaluation process after the 2020 Solicitation
Approved Application Categories

Regional Solicitation

Unique Projects* (2.5% of federal Funds; $4M to $5M) Including the Regional Travel Behavior Inventory/Modeling Program

MODAL CATEGORIES

Roadways Including Multimodal Elements

Transit and Travel Demand Management (TDM) Projects

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

APPLICATION CATEGORIES

Traffic Management Technologies
Spot Mobility and Safety
Strategic Capacity
Roadway Reconstruction/Modernization

Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Project
Transit Expansion
Transit Modernization
Travel Demand Management • Base Level • Innovative

Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities
Pedestrian Facilities
Safe Routes to School (Infrastructure)
Unique Project Characteristics

• Projects that do not fit into other application categories
• Are difficult to score using existing measures – leads to need for more qualitative scoring
• Have a more immediate implementation timeline (< typical 4-to-5-year period to receive Regional Solicitation funds)
• Potentially innovative, demonstration type projects or data collection, surveying projects
• Have regional benefits
• Combine or cross modal categories
Past Funded Unique Projects

• 1990 – Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI) ($50,000 FAU)
• 2008 – MPCA Diesel Retrofits ($500,000 CMAQ)
• 2010 – TBI $ (special federal ARRA funding)
• 2012 – MPCA Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
  – $500,000 CMAQ-additional federal funds became available
  – Part of local match provided by Xcel Energy
• 2014 – Transit On-Board Survey ($800,000 STP-additional federal funds became available)
• 2016 and 2018 – Regional Model/TBI ($2.7M STP in 2016, $850,000 in 2018)
• 2018 – St. Paul/Hourcar Mobility Hub Charging Stations ($4 M)
Innovative TDM Projects

• Innovative Travel Demand Management (TDM) projects category established 2014 in the Transit and TDM application category
• $1.2 M in funds available above $5.8 M on-going funding for Transportation Management Organizations (funded as part of one $7 M project)
• Funds available in next 2-3 year period as opposed to 4-5 year period for other Solicitation categories
• Minimum federal award $100,000, maximum federal award $500,000
Innovative TDM Project Characteristics

- TDM projects are federal high-priority for CMAQ funds
- Demonstrate air-quality/congestion-reduction benefits through single-occupant-vehicle travel reduction
- Introduce new TDM concepts to the region, expand to a new geographic area, serve populations previously unserved, or incorporate enhancements to an existing program
- Small in scale, not capital-intensive investments
- Scoring includes qualitative assessment of innovation
TAC Feedback from 2016

- Unique projects are difficult to compare
- TAC does not have a technical recommendation for how to objectively differentiate projects
- Projects should meet the qualifying criteria, as appropriate
- Do not solicit for unique project applications - Unique projects requests should be sent directly to TAB for consideration
Unique Projects Development Recommendation

• Past solicitation for unique projects resulted in difficult to compare proposals, goals not well defined
• Difficult to know what technical questions to ask without specific program goals
• Use a TAB policymaker work group again
  – Resolicit for interest from TAB members but use similar membership as 2019
  – Three to four meetings likely
• Considerations for the work group
  – Focus on 1-2 goals that will likely result in a narrow scope of projects that can be compared
  – What information is needed by TAB to make an adequate evaluation of the projects and how they achieve the unique project goals?
  – What is the role of technical committees in evaluating proposals?
  – What are the max and min award amounts, match requirements?
  – Should TDM be combined with Unique Projects?
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