

# Regional Solicitation Unique Projects Development Process

Transportation Advisory Board – Exec Comm, Feb 17, 2021



# 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

# Polycymaker 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



# 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?

Contact:

**Cole Hiniker, Multimodal Planning Manager**

**612-743-2215**

**[Cole.Hiniker@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Cole.Hiniker@metc.state.mn.us)**

