

ACTION TRANSMITTAL No. 2015-01

DATE: December 19, 2014
TO: Technical Advisory Committee
FROM: TAC Funding and Programming Committee
PREPARED BY: Joe Barbeau, Senior Planner (651-602-1705)
REQUESTED ACTION: The Metropolitan Council requests that TAB adopt the TIP Public Involvement Policy.
RECOMMENDED MOTION: Recommend approval of the TIP Public Involvement Policy.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF ACTION: The Metropolitan Council lacks a public involvement policy for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and TIP amendments. The attached proposed policy will set expectations for public involvement opportunities related to the TIP.

The Metropolitan Council has traditionally held a 45-day comment period and accepted comments via email, telephone and mail prior to enacting its full TIP. The attached policy will standardize this practice.

In April 2014, TAB approved a process to “streamline” certain TIP amendments, primarily those that are not regionally significant. This enabled amendment requests that amount to a formality to be processed in a timelier manner. However, along with the full TIP, some amendments require more scrutiny. While there is no policy guidance, staff has traditionally put regionally significant amendments through a public review period. A survey of nine other large urban area MPOs shows TIP amendment public involvement periods ranging from 14 to 30 days. Staff feels that a 21-day period will suffice in providing ample time for public review without building in an unnecessarily long delay.

RELATIONSHIP TO REGIONAL POLICY: Federal law requires that all transportation projects that will be fully or partially funded with federal funds must be in an approved Transportation Improvement Program and meet the following four tests: fiscal constraint; consistency with the adopted regional transportation plan; air quality conformity and opportunity for public input. It is the TAB’s responsibility to adopt and amend the TIP according to these four requirements.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS AND ACTION: At its December 18, 2014 meeting, the Funding and Programming Committee unanimously recommended this TIP Public Involvement Policy for approval.

ROUTING

TO	ACTION REQUESTED	DATE COMPLETED
TAC Funding & Programming Committee	Review & Recommend	12/18/2014
Technical Advisory Committee	Review & Recommend	
Transportation Advisory Board	Review & Adopt	
Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee	Concurrence	
Metropolitan Council	Concurrence	

Proposed Transportation Improvement Program Public Participation Process for the Metropolitan Council

To provide public input opportunities for the Transportation Improvement Program, the Metropolitan Council and the Transportation Advisory Board will follow these processes.

New TIP

For the annual new TIP, public comment opportunities should be offered at Funding & Programming, Technical Advisory Committee, and Transportation Advisory Board meetings where the TIP is presented as a business item. Before taking a vote on the item, the committee chair shall ask if there are any public comments to provide a clear time when comments could be made.

A 45-day public comment period will be held to accept comments by email, phone, or mail. The Council will distribute notice of formal public comment opportunities as called for in the Council's Public Engagement Plan. Following the public comment period, the TIP will be brought directly to TAB for approval.

TIP Amendments

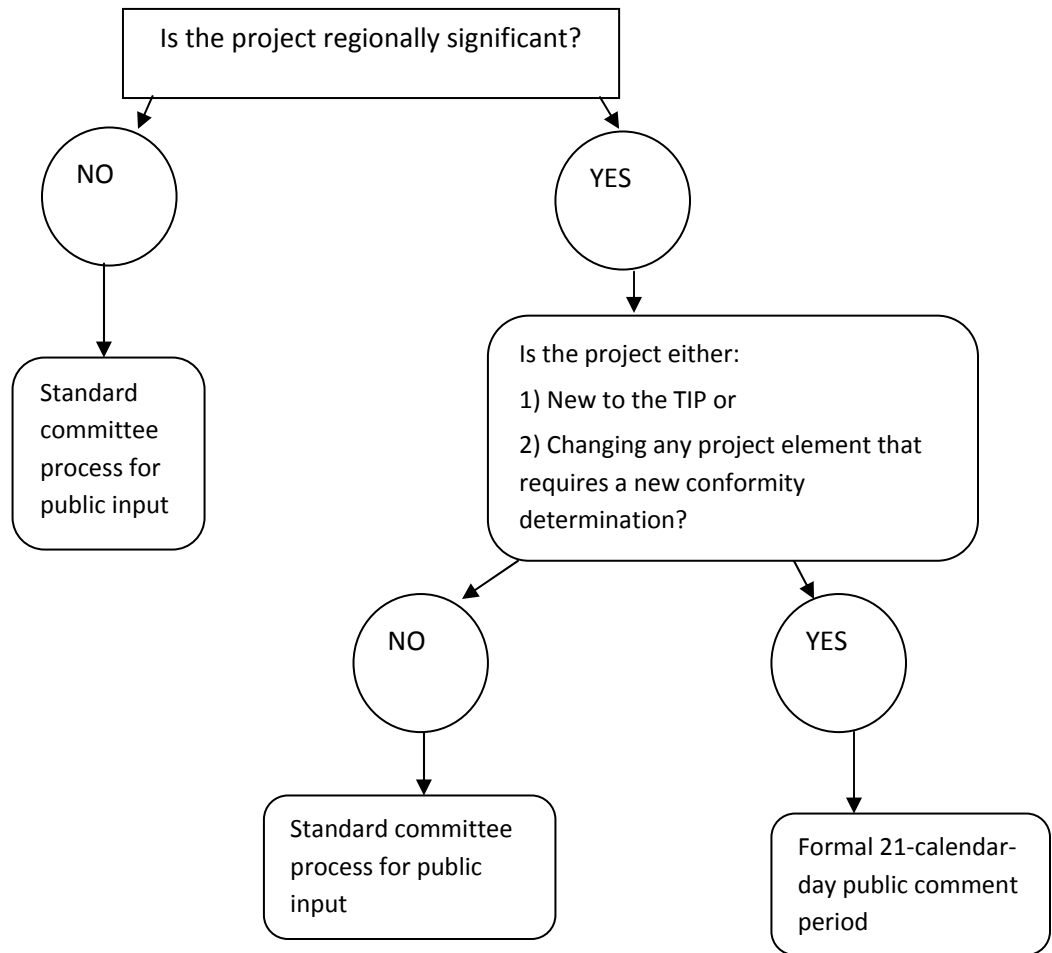
1. Public input opportunities are offered at Funding & Programming, Technical Advisory Committee, and Transportation Advisory Board meeting where a TIP amendment is presented as a business item for approval. Before taking a vote on the item, the committee chair shall ask for public comments.

Streamlined TIP amendments presented directly to TAB shall not be placed on the consent agenda. The TAB chair shall ask for public comments. Streamlined TIP amendments may be placed on the consent agendas for the Council's Transportation Committee and the full Council.

2. Amendments for regionally-significant projects require a 21-calendar-day public comment period to begin the day after TAB releases the amendment for public comment. The comment period is only required for regionally-significant projects that meet one of these two criteria:
 - Not current in the TIP
 - Changing any project element that requires a new conformity determination

The Council will distribute notice of formal public comment opportunities as called for in the Council's Public Engagement Plan. Following the public comment period, the amendment will be brought directly to TAB for approval. "Regionally significant" is defined below.

The following chart shows the decision-making process for whether to subject an amendment to a 21-calendar-day public comment period or to follow the standard process of allowing for public input at the TAB meeting.



Definition of “Regionally Significant Project”

“Regionally significant” refers to the air quality conformity definition, which is: “Regionally significant project means a transportation project (other than an exempt project) that is on a facility which serves regional transportation needs (such as access to and from the area outside of the region, major activity centers in the region, major planned developments such as new retail malls, sports complexes, etc., or transportation terminals as well as most terminals themselves) and would normally be included in the modeling of a metropolitan area’s transportation network, including at a minimum all principal arterial highways and all fixed guideway transit facilities that offer an alternatives to regional highway travel.” [EPA Transportation Conformity Rules 93.101]

A project is generally considered regionally significant in the Twin Cities maintenance area if:

- It adds one or more travel lanes for over one mile,
 - It involves the addition of an interchange, or
 - It involves the reconfiguration of an interchange such that a movement is added or eliminated.”
- [Transportation Conformity Procedures for Minnesota: A Handbook for Transportation and Air Quality Professionals, Minnesota Interagency Air Quality and Transportation Planning Committee]