

Information Item

DATE: September 25, 2015
TO: Transportation Advisory Committee
PREPARED BY: Joe Barbeau, Senior Planner (651-602-1705)
SUBJECT: 2016 Regional Solicitation Update

The 2016 Regional Solicitation will be released in May of 2016. A draft Regional Solicitation package will be completed in January. Between now and then, the Funding & Programming Committee, TAC, and TAB will see proposed changes and will be asked to provide feedback.

Today's discussion will include: a review of the final survey results and a review of nine discussion topics and staff responses to them.

2014 REGIONAL SOLICITATION SURVEY RESPONSE SUMMARY

Following completion of the 2014 Regional Solicitation, surveys were provided to TAB members, TAC/Funding & Programming members, applicants, and scorers. Full results of each are shown below. Themes were difficult to extract, as nearly every respondent provided unique concerns. The most prevalent theme made in the comments was that scoring guidelines are in need of clarity and consistency. Scoring guidance is among several things staff is currently addressing. Below are lists of themes identified by multiple respondents in each survey.

TAB (9 respondents)

- Geographic distribution
- Equity: How it is defined, the impact on results and consideration of elderly and disabled

TAC/Funding and Programming (16 respondents)

- Scoring Consistency
 - Need better consistency on whether projects (and how many projects) can obtain top score within a category.
 - Try to limit need to interpret scoring guidelines.
- Equity and Housing: re-evaluate how it is scored and how it fits.
- Connectors are not able to compete with other roads.
- Bridges:
 - Not enough applications or funded projects.
 - Make it its own category.
 - Allow B-minors/collectors.

Applicants (17 respondents)

- 13 respondents reported that application preparation was easier compared to past years while only one reported that it was more difficult.
- Desire to be able to include more/longer explanations.
- Scoring criteria and interpretation by scorers/Council staff.
- Some applicants would like to be able to produce the final application as a pdf that looks attractive for distribution/archiving.
- Examine ability to upload documents?
- Are rural projects at a disadvantage?
- Roadway on new alignments should be separate category from existing.
- Examine mapping improvements
 - Drawing project areas (particularly for intersections).
 - Editing (without need to start over).
 - Scaling (to distinguish proposed projects from existing features).

Scoring Committee Members (24 respondents)

- Scorers seemed to have some trouble finding/interpreting information from the applications.
- Scoring committee structure worked well.
- Improve the maps. Some technical glitches and inconsistent provision valuable information. Have applicants show location of improvements and bike/ped connections on project map.
- Timing: Scorers need more time / applications provided in a more timely manner.
- Existing projects tend to be favored over new projects.
- Clarity needed on how to distribute scores after top score assigned. Clarify whether criteria will have a project receive the maximum score. Make sure pro-rating makes sense.
- Make sure instructions to applicants are clear so they all use the same methodology.
- Need validation of information provided by applicants.

TAB Replies (9 Respondents)

1 Agency Type (check one)

Answer Choices--	Responses--
State	2
City	2
County	1
Citizen representative	3
Transit representative	0
Freight representative	1
Non-motorized representative	0
Total	9

2. Do you have concerns related to any of the following? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices--	Responses--
Distribution of funds between the roadways, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian modal categories	2
Weighting/distribution of points	3
Number and type of sub-categories within the three modal categories	0
Criteria/measures used to score applications	4
Other	2
Total Respondents: 7	

3. Please provide specific comments to help articulate the concerns alluded to in the above question.

- 1.
2. As a citizen representative I'm not sure if senior citizens without options for transit have even been considered. I would be willing to participate in any upcoming conversation regarding equity in the distribution of funding.
3. I think we need a deeper dive into the equity measures. It seems we have some louder voices on TAB from the exurban areas and they don't necessarily represent the views of the entire group. Loud does not equal the best idea.
4. As a new TAB member did not participate in the full Regional Solicitation and not able to respond to this survey.
5. As long as the distribution of funds and the criteria supports the overall transportation to ensure competitiveness of our Region, I do not have concerns about the process.
6. Use of traffic operations software for AQ reductions was problematic. If an intersection was under complete gridlock in base case, there was no AQ emissions because no traffic was moving through the intersection (no VMT). With improvements, traffic moved, VMT produced and AQ emissions produced. So the project resulted in a MODELED increase in pollutants.
7. Suburbs will never be able to compete with MPLS. Have a separate formula for the suburbs.
8. I am concerned about the "equity" measure - how it is (not) defined, how much weight the rating is given, how it gives undue preference to just a few communities, etc.
9. I think concerns is probably too strong but I am eager to learn more about the analysis of how the new equity criteria worked. Also, concerned that the base midpoints for each of the modes is based on the % of applicants by mode. Not sure that is an accurate proxy for demand.

4. Are there specific changes you would make to the criteria/measures established?

- 1.
2. Having a strong background in healthcare makes me wonder why this huge upcoming aging population has not been considered for improving THEIR mobility. Metro Mobility is one option but there are others ways that every community in the 7 county metro area could benefit by some creative ideas. The need is growing quickly and I don't know if it is being addressed.

3. I think we should go with the equity consultant and have a balanced group with them that person. Balanced meaning not just who wants to but that we have representatives from urban, suburban, exurban, cities, counties, and citizens.
- 4.
- 5.
6. Not at this time.
7. Suburbs will never be able to compete with MPLS. Have a separate formula for the suburbs.
8. I don't think that "equity" should apply to roadway projects and that the number of "equity" points for transit and trails should be reduced. There are no clear definitions of how "equity" is to be evaluated in the context of each of these categories. Projects that affect pockets of poverty throughout the metro region are not awarded any equity points if they are not within the few designated communities, which is not appropriate.
9. I am too new to TAB to have specific suggestions, mostly curious at this point. As we learn more about the equity criteria I hope we are open to refining it

5. How well did the regional solicitation process reflect regional policy?

- 1.
2. I'm not sure.
3. I thought this time it ultimately reflected it well, the votes are often close and it feels very precarious. Like with a little push from certain members we will teeter off the edge and cater to their concerns. I am concerned though that the equity measures may be eroded. We must remember our regional role reflecting the urban, suburban and exurban geography and need factors.
- 4.
5. As I continue to learn more about the solicitation process, I will provide feedback on how the process supports our regional policy.
6. better than in past
- 7.
8. The process probably does reasonably reflect the Met Council staff perspective, but I don't think it reflects TAB's perspective. The TAB process was rushed and I think the final decision was made by just wearing down the TAB members till time ran out.
9. Well. I think the updated solicitation was very thoughtful and certainly shaped by the many different opinions and approaches to regional policy. Even through the addition of equity was controversial it has highlighted it as an issue and driven a lot of conversation.

6. On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), do you agree with the following?

	1-	2-	3-	4-	5-	Total-	Weighted Average-
TAB had adequate time to discuss funding options	3	0	0	3	2	8	3.1
The funding options provided to TAB by TAC made sense	0	0	3	3	2	8	3.9

7. How well did the regional solicitation process reflect regional policy?

- 1.
2. Senior transportation.
3. We need to be more realistic why Hennepin and Minneapolis, St Paul and Ramsey and bigger urban counties get more projects, quite simply they have more people and more need. We are talking about government money; it should go where the needs and density are found. Also the ideas about the disabled and elderly need to be explored, it was okay but we should do an analysis if we are meeting the needs of these populations - it should be based on facts not emotions. Fact is the disabled are a small part of the population but the baby boomers are aging and those needs are very real - but what are the needs of boomers? Transit? Vans to medical appts? Or will they just drive their cars no matter what...then why cater investments to them.
- 4.
- 5.
6. No
7. Suburbs will never be able to compete with MPLS. Have a separate formula for the suburbs.
8. I repeatedly asked for clear definitions/criteria for equity, in the separate contexts of roadway, transit, and trail projects. I have never received an answer.
9. No

8. What one item would you change about the solicitation above all else?

- 1.
2. Roundtable discussions.
3. I would like an analysis of where the money goes versus who applies and then make sure equity, density and need are considered. One item I would NOT change is equity. There is tension on the TAB, this is normal, but the item I would change is to make sure everyone has a voice and not those that just talk the most and loudest. How can we truly meet the transportation needs of our greater Metro area based on a set of fair criteria, we did that but there were some unhappy. We have to remember we will never make everyone happy and our policies need to be fair and equitable for all. We must remember the intent of TAB and government funding and hold to those principles.
- 4.
- 5.
6. Improve analysis technique for AQ.
7. Suburbs will never be able to compete with MPLS. Have a separate formula for the suburbs.
8. I would significantly modify the equity section of the process, and shrink the number of equity points possible for any project.
9. Refine the equity criteria as we learn more.

TAC / Funding & Programming Committee Replies (16 Respondents)

1 Member/alternate of (check all that apply)

Answer Choices–	Responses–
TAC	11
Funding & Programming	11
Total Respondents: 16	

2. Agency type (check one)

Answer Choices–	Responses–
State	3
County	5
City	6
Other	2
Total Respondents: 16	

3. Do you have concerns related to any of the following? (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices–	Responses–
Weighting/distribution of points	33.3% (5)
Number and type of sub-categories within the three modal categories	20.0% (3)
Project cost inflation	6.7% (1)
Modal distribution of funds	26.7% (4)
Scoring committee structure	6.7% (1)
Scoring criteria	26.7% (4)
Qualifying criteria	13.3% (2)
Qualifying review process	0.0% (0)
Process for determining final program of projects	13.3% (2)
Schedule	6.7% (1)
Consistency with the 2040 TPP	6.7% (1)
Maximum and minimum fund requests	20.0% (3)
Restrictions (e.g., project bundling)	20.0% (3)
Other (please specify) Online process may have limited the ability of some project sponsors to fully describe the background and regional benefits of projects as # words was limited. Required application information modeling procedure for highway projects Minimum scores for modes should be considered.	26.7% (4)
Total Respondents: 15	

4. Please provide specific comments to help articulate the concerns alluded to in the above question.

1. Some criteria did not appear to make a difference. In other words F&P should look at the criteria where multiple projects received the same points or very close to them and reevaluate these criteria. Only one project should get the maximum points in any criteria. The maximum project cap for trails should be evaluated to allow more projects to be funded. \$5m projects use up the dollars fast. The Equity criteria should to eliminated or modified based on measurable outcomes. No Connector roadways got funded. It is very hard for these roads to compete within the scoring system. There should be some follow up on how these roadways could get some federal funds as they provide an important role to the region. Perhaps a set aside for Connectors is necessary? Does the federal revenue formula for the MPO include rural highway mileage? How do our funding criteria align with the way the federal funds are allocated to the region?

2. CMAQ committee should have greater diversity of committee members. Majority are Metro Transit/Metro Council staff
 3. The scoring and qualifying criteria made it virtually impossible for Connectors to score well enough to be funded. I would support going back to the system of scoring each Minor Arterial sub-category- Expander, Reliever, Augmenter, and Connector- separately.
 4. Some categories had normalization to the maximum amount of point possible and others did not. I felt that in my scoring areas, the Met Council staff should just have scored them as they knew the criteria so much better and that my scores were changed upon review. I did not have any issues with them being changed because we had to get them right, I just felt like "What is the point of me scoring this if the staff knows what the scores should be?" This is a difficult issue because the staff is dealing in the world of federal funding all year and some scorers are coming in once a year or less and just don't have the level of aptitude necessary.
 5. TAB was clear that they wanted Bridges to continue to be a part of the Regional Solicitation and I don't see that the final outcome represented that desire. I also don't agree that Bridges should be considered part of the "reconstruction/rehabilitation" category of STP - I believe if the Region wants to continue funding bridges, then they should be considered as their own sub-category.
 6. Under the current criteria new alignment projects didn't stand a chance. Should be a separate category.
 7. One comment for future consideration is to allow the bundling of logical and related projects that stay within the maximum funding limit. Also, consideration for an increase in funding for other modes, such as Roadway - Bridge projects, where there is a high infrastructure safety need.
 - 8.
 9. The fact that we received so few bridge project applications into the process indicates to me the change to the qualifying criteria for bridges (A-Minor or greater) didn't work. Need to rethink this for the next solicitation - perhaps back down to collector. Didn't care for the emphasis being placed on roadway preservation vs. roadway expansion. Both are important and should be given equal consideration.
 10. Minimum scores for receiving funds for a category should be considered. For example if a project gets less than 50% of the points in its category it shouldn't be funded.
 11. Regarding the process for determining the final program of projects: There are fewer project types in the solicitation that are eligible for CMAQ funds, while there are many more projects eligible for STP and TAP funds. At the end of the solicitation process, staff has to match project types with federal funding pots, and there are far fewer projects eligible for CMAQ. Regarding consistency with the 2040 TPP, the Council should strive to be consistent without being biased or prescriptive.
 12. We need to find a better model to be used in modeling roadway projects that require air quality evaluation
 13. More weight is given to existing projects throughout the scoring process; at what point do projects that fill in gaps/missing links receive a bonus compared to other projects that replace and/or saturate areas with existing infrastructure and services. This seems inconsistent with Federal guidelines for CMAQ funds, which are intended to help start up viable, new transit services. Projects should be scored on new ridership only, not existing riders on existing routes.
 14. Re: Cost Inflation: (A) Regional Solicitation application materials requested project cost information in 2013 dollars (not 2014 as discussed at TAC in Feb/March 2015). (B) Metro Transit did not inflate bus costs to future year dollars in the application (C) Transit service projects should also receive an inflationary increase, especially since the service is provided over a 3-year period where construction bids are solicited and established in a single program year. In light of the points made at TAC, there may be differences between service and construction inflationary increases, but transit service should receive something for inflation.
 15. Required application information - project descriptions. Applicants could use MnDOT STIP/ATIP Template Guidance (<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/pdf/stip/2016-2019%20ATIP%20Template%20Guidance%20Part%20I%20&%20II.pdf>) to help create the project descriptions, that would be beneficial to staff so they don't have to do this. Given that even a small discrepancy in a project description can hold up the authorization process and sometimes result in a TIP amendment. Also, when applicants request letters of support from MnDOT, they should supply information about the request, including detailed description, location map, funding scenario, in order for MnDOT to evaluate whether the agency can support the application. Schedule - the due date of the applications was the Monday after the Thanksgiving holiday. Made for a tough week before and long weekend of completing applications.
 16. Restrictions- can we explore a way to allow scoring of region-wide projects such as regional system management that was disqualified because it couldn't be scored based on specific corridors.
5. Are there specific changes you would make to the criteria/measures?
1. The Role in the Regional Transportation System and Economy, Job Concentration measure should utilize the TAZs that the project touches.

- 2.
- 3.
4. I would make either all or none of the categories be normalized against the maximum.
5. Housing performance score seems overly complicated and weighted too high.
6. Under Roadway Expansion: new alignments should be a separate category and should not compete against reconstruction projects. Different criteria should be used for scoring of new alignment projects. Bridge projects should include B-Minor Arterials and Collectors as before.
7. None
- 8.
9. Bridge Qualifying Criteria. More equity across roadway categories.
- 10.
11. Apply CMAQ funding more liberally to projects outside the traditional transit expansion category. It is an air quality program, not a transit program. Contentious and unrelated policy issues like equity should be reevaluated to determine whether it belongs in a regional solicitation process.
12. More points projects to improve air quality
13. The process needs to be consistent with Federal requirements and place more emphasis on transit service that fills gaps or completes missing links, as opposed to service that may be a different type, but essentially replaces existing service. There is also a mismatch between the scoring criteria as written in text, as interpreted by Council staff, and the actual scoring method used in some cases. The criteria should be clarified so there is a direct link between the written text scoring method and how the scores were applied.
14. None.
- 15.
- 16.

6. On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), do you agree with the following?

	1-	2-	3-	4-	5-	Total-	Weighted Average-
TAC F&P and TAC had adequate time to discuss funding options	0	1	4	6	2	13	3.69
The funding options provided to TAC by TAC F&P made sense	0	0	3	8	3	14	4.00

7. Were there any issues/concerns you raised during the solicitation process that were not addressed? Please provide a brief description of the issue and how the issue was not addressed.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
4. I was disappointed in the first meeting of my area. There were no introductions, no introduction of what we were doing. I would have greatly benefitted by the staff introducing the scoring area I was in, what it was we were doing, how to look at it. I think the staff thinks we (outside agency scorers) know more than we do.
- 5.
- 6.
7. None
- 8.
9. The topic of 'Equity' got lots of attention. Although it's important, defining equity and allotting points for equity is difficult. Perhaps a more thought out process/definition for how equity gets included in the Regional Solicitation scoring is needed. Too many folks seemed uneasy about this - need to get more acceptance.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
14. None.
- 15.
- 16.

8. What one item would you change about the solicitation above all else?

1. Equity and Affordable Housing measure needs to be reevaluated. %age of points should be lowered until benefit can be measured.
- 2.
3. Reinstate eligibility for Class B Minor Arterial bridges in the "Bridge" category.

4. Standardizing scoring categories so they all follow a similar scoring method. We shouldn't have to discuss this category is scored against the max and this next you can score however you want.
- 5.
6. Bridge rehab/Replacement should stand as its own category. Should not be lumped together with road projects and should include bridges on B-Minor Arterials and Collectors as before.
7. Ability to bundle related projects.
- 8.
9. The Bridge qualifying criteria
10. The time frame was very condensed to approve the projects.
11. Have the Transportation Advisory Board make the final determination, not the Met Council.
12. Include chances for green projects to get funded
- 13.
14. No change proposed: instead voicing support to keep both the Transit Expansion and Transit Modernization categories.
- 15.
16. Small logistical item- ask project proposers to provide project descriptions per STIP guidance so they can easily be input into the STIP once selected. Could provide STIP guidance to proposers if appropriate.

Applicant Responses (17 Respondents)

1 Agency type (check one)

Answer Choices–	Responses–
State	3
City	4
County	9
Total	16

2. Category you submitted in (Check all that apply)

Answer Choices–	Responses–
Roadway Expansion	47.1% (8)
Roadway Reconstruction & Modernization	35.6% (6)
Roadway System Management	23.5% (4)
Bridges	5.9% (1)
Transit Expansion	29.4% (5)
Transit System Modernization	0.0% (0)
Multi-use Trails & Bikeways	17.7% (3)
Pedestrian Facilities	11.8% (2)
Safe Routes to Schools	0.0% (0)
Total Respondents: 17	

3. Compared to past years, would you say the application preparation was (Check one)

Answer Choices–	Responses–
This was the first time your agency submitted an application	6.7% (1)
Easier/took less staff time to prepare	86.7%(13)
Harder/took more staff time to prepare	6.7% (1)
Total	15

4. Are there specific features of the online application that should be changed?

1. When I submitted the application, I attempted to attach an Excel spreadsheet that included multiple worksheets. However, when it was submitted, the software only accepted the front sheet. Either the application should be able to accept the entire file or there needs to be a different means of submitting items like this
- 2.
3. The Met Council trail counts should be the metric for trail use/need instead of number of residents or jobs, as some trail facilities cross large areas of no jobs or residents, effectively lowering their scores. With actual Met Council sponsored trail counts figured in, this would indicate true demand and usage, and, trails that cross expanses of areas without jobs or residents will automatically be scored very low, even though there is a large need, a critical link is built, etc.
4. In doing the application, there were categories I missed that were not explained completely. I had to add information when Met Council found an error. Once I went back and realized my mistake it was clear. Maybe "hints" for the information necessary.
5. The maps need to be scaled better in order to properly distinguish proposed projects from existing features.
6. Did not provide enough area for explanation and background.
7. I wish the presentation of the final version of each application looked better. Our agency maintains an electronic and paper copy of each application that we submit and that gets submitted on our roadway system by an external agency, so there is a desire to have the final applications look professional for archiving purposes. For minor improvements made at various locations (Such as countdown timer installations throughout a city) it was not clear on how to create your set of maps to use for the transit, RACP, etc. portions of the application.
8. Regional trails should be included in the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network.

9. I think the online process was excellent.
- 10.
11. Include ability to save applications as a .pdf and distribute for other to review.
12. I liked that several steps were automated, but there was definitely a learning curve. It was not intuitive the first time around.
13. Our project didn't exactly fit into how the application was structured which made it difficult to answer some of the questions as well as create the maps.
14. Loading the documents or additional documents that you would like to include (information from completed studies).
 - o Being able to type a short description for some of the items where you just answered a question.
15. The mapping tool, while overall very helpful, could be made less clunky to use. If I am remembering correctly, there was no way to edit/remove sections of the route or stations once they were placed without removing the whole thing.
16. There was no opportunity or method in the application to show how calculations and numbers were arrived at. Also, there was no way for an applicant to check or preview the information that was supplied by Met Council staff. This did not allow an opportunity to check or verify the numbers when the scoring was done, and limited the ability to appeal scores.
17. The online maps were nice, but it seemed that there was not a common approach for drawing the project area. It didn't work as well for intersection projects as it did for linear projects. And the area and length calculations were too specific (to the thousandth decimal point) to be used for ranking, considering it is hand drawn on-line. The numbers should be rounded.

5. Are there changes you would make in the application training (overall regional solicitation information, online application, mapping, MnDOT State Aid information)?

1. I would provide more clarification on what needs to be submitted.
- 2.
3. Mapping of corridors should include the entire proposed regional trail corridor, instead of just part, and not omit any sections of a regional trail master plan. Without that, some sections and connections won't ever be connected.
4. Training was adequate.
5. A couple more opportunities to work directly with staff during the application process. I recall only one working session when I could come down and get online, open my application, and work directly with staff to answer questions and/or fix issues.
- 6.
7. Allow more time for questions. There was a group that started at the end of our session so we were forced to end our training session at the pre-determined time slot.
- 8.
9. No.
- 10.
11. Did not attend training but found the overall application process to be intuitive and straight forward.
12. The wording of some of the questions was confusing.
13. provide some more details on how criteria will be scored or what is being considered specifically.
- 14.
15. It seemed clear for the most part.
- 16.
17. Common approach for creating maps and project area

6. Are there specific changes you would make to the qualifying criteria/requirements established to determine whether projects are eligible?

1. No.
2. We were fortunate to have an intern available to do the required modeling. Most agencies do not and, therefore, have to hire consultants to do the modeling. It appeared that many of the applications were prepared in whole by consultants and the methodology used for crash reduction calculations stood out as being different than the "standard" methodology.
3. Yes, please include the applicable goals, and reference associated plans and page numbers. Include a link to those plans and page numbers.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
7. Review the process for addressing "sister bridges"

8. There should be some considerations for projects in outlying areas.
9. No.
- 10.
11. Applying under more than one category should be allowed. Specifically - Multiuse Trails and Pedestrian Facilities.
12. One proposal was disqualified because it bundled two similar projects together. This rule was in the fine print, but would've been caught had it been more clearly stated in the qualifying criteria.
13. provide an opportunity for explanation, especially for projects that are unique.
14. Criteria to assist lower volume roads score higher.
15. None
16. On transit applications, several applications benefited from existing ridership, whether on other routes, or on routes that are to be replaced by the new service.
17. No. It was nice to have them as check boxes instead of needing to reiterate the question in a response.

7. There are a number of submittals/attachments required with applications. Were any of these difficult to produce or obtain?

1. Not really. Understanding what all needed to be submitted was somewhat difficult. The submittal of them was also difficult, as files did not attach completely.
2. No. In fact the mapping feature was very easy and was informative to view.
3. Maps or other info automatically generated by the system should not have to be then downloaded and re-uploaded.
4. The maps were easy to create. The submittals were also easy to attach.
5. Crash data is very difficult to assemble, especially when dealing with a new alignment.
- 6.
7. No. This was a great way to organize our applications. Otherwise I end up creating one huge PDF binder on the day of application submittal.
8. No.
9. No.
- 10.
- 11.
12. Metro Council should provide accident history analysis as part of the online mapping tool.
13. The mapping was difficult to use and create appropriately.
14. No, but it seemed some other items should have been additional documents.
15. No
16. There seems to be inequity in requirements for agencies other than the Metro Council or Metro Transit to receive "approval" from the Metro Council for transit projects. The local matching funds are from the same source (RTC) so all agencies should be required to go through the same process. Metro Transit and Metro Council applicants were allowed to write their own approval letters, while other applicants were required to go through the Council.
17. No. Truck counts are not commonly collected so it was additional data needed specifically for this application, but was not difficult to produce.

8. Was there any confusion or difficulty with any prioritizing criteria (i.e., scoring measures)? Please highlight specific issues that can be addressed.

1. The distance criteria between A-Minor Arterials and Principal Arterials needs to be clarified. I think, in the end, I agreed with the way it was handled, but the way it was handled actually differed from the directions.
2. There were instances in the scoring committees where scorers needed to confer about how various categories should be done. There was a conscientious effort among committees to make these consistent.
3. Entire regional trail corridors should be in the automated mapping corridors.
4. See above under 4. The only issue is to make sure that "ALL" of the data is included in the application. Some of that was my error; some of it was confusion of the correct data. Met council actually was very helpful with addressing my issues.
5. For new alignments several questions asked for current data but there isn't any current data because the road hasn't been built yet. Separate new construction from existing and ask different questions specifically tailored for new construction.
6. Age was a confusing criterion. Some projects scored low and others high even though both were proposing facilities that currently do not exist.
7. No. The online application made the solicitation process very clear. The only hiccup that staff came across was dealing with the Vehicle Delay / Emissions Reduction portion, however, MetCouncil published a help tool to address the confusion.
- 8.
9. No.

- 10.
 11. Provide more latitude for local communities to refine and identify their tier 1 and tier 2 alignments prior to next regional solicitation. Re-evaluate the cost effectiveness measure. Projects that are expected to have high use but are not located in higher density areas do not score well. Applications should be
 - 12.
 - 13.
 - 14.
 15. None
 16. As noted above, more weight is given to existing projects throughout the scoring process; at what point do projects that fill in gaps/missing links receive a bonus compared to other projects that replace and/or saturate areas with existing infrastructure and services. This seems inconsistent with Federal guidelines for CMAQ funds, which are intended to help start up viable, new transit services. Projects should be scored on new ridership only, not existing riders on existing routes.
 17. No.
9. Were the scoring guidelines clear and helpful to your understanding the criteria?
1. Somewhat.
 2. Yes, but I had the benefit of being involved in the process of determining them.
 3. No. They were difficult to understand as the language did not always match the online with the final print version.
 4. Somewhat. I lost points in some categories I thought I would receive them and was rewarded points in other categories. Overall I think it was pretty clear.
 5. Not when it came to questions that didn't apply to new alignments.
 - 6.
 7. Yes. It is 100% based on quantitative values assigned to each project.
 - 8.
 9. I thought that the wording under Risk Assessment was somewhat confusing. May want to clarify the difference between "No Known" and "Unknown," as they relate to Section 106 Historic Resources.
 - 10.
 11. Yes
 12. No, possible points allotted were shared upfront, but the scoring methodology wasn't. As both an applicant and reviewer, I found the pedestrian/bike access scoring methodology very questionable. Had I known it was going to be scored that way I would've changed my response.
 13. not exactly
 - 14.
 15. Yes
 16. There is a mismatch between the scoring criteria as written in text, as interpreted by Council staff, and the actual scoring method used in some cases. The criteria should be clarified so there is a direct link between the written text scoring method and how the scores were applied.
 17. Yes
10. What one thing would you change about the solicitation process, criteria, or scoring above all else?
1. More clarity on the scoring criteria and what needs to be submitted.
 2. Make Class B minor Arterial bridges eligible in the "Bridge" category again.
 3. Make the entire planned corridor for a regional trail eligible for funding by including them in the mapped corridors and including all Met Council sponsored annual visit counts. Thank you.
 4. Allow more time to complete the application. Maybe start in May or June for training and the December 1 deadline. It took time to collect all of the information.
 5. Separate new alignments from existing. They should be separate categories.
 6. Eliminate inconsistencies in scoring.
 7. Projects located in rural areas will tend not to score well since they are not located near Light Rail Transit, do not have high population densities, and aren't located near critical facilities. However, these projects may be extremely important since they provide transportation facilities to the general public who commute from these rural areas to downtown areas each day.
 - 8.
 - 9.
 - 10.
 11. Eliminate actual scorers from the process by further developing an online scoring system that provides full transparency for the applicant.

12. My biggest complaint is the rigidity of the application process. One of our applications was disqualified over a technicality, and two others submitted with errors. Yes, there should have been better internal proofing, but it would've also been nice if there was a short window of opportunity to make changes that were identified by Regional Solicitation staff. Maybe a two-week early review period.
13. allow more words for answers
14. The trail scoring does not seem to benefit areas not located in the urban core but would be a benefit to the metro area.
- 15.
16. The process needs to be consistent with Federal requirements and place more emphasis on transit service that fills gaps or completes missing links, as opposed to service that may be a different type, but essentially replaces existing service
17. Add the ability to export the entire application including maps and attachments into one pdf.

Scoring Committee Member Replies (24 Respondents)

5. On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), do you agree with the following?

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Total
Information from the applications was easy to find and interpret	16.7% (4)	16.7 (4)	16.7% (4)	37.5% (9)	12.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	24
The scoring committee structure was effective	4.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	12.5% (3)	50.0% (12)	33.3% (8)	0.0% (0)	24
The way to distribute scores within the measure made sense	4.2% (1)	16.7% (4)	16.7% (4)	41.7% (10)	20.8% (5)	0.0% (0)	24
My scoring methodology was consistent with the scoring guidelines	4.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (2)	20.8% (5)	66.7% (16)	0.0% (0)	24
The scoring guidelines were useful/understandable	4.2% (1)	8.3% (2)	37.5% (9)	29.1% (7)	20.8% (5)	0.0% (0)	24

6. Please provide any comments you may have for question number 5

1. There were a few instances where the scorers who hadn't been involved with the application creation were unclear whether they should be scoring on absolute or relative scales.
2. The infrastructure age portion of the score was simple and straight forward, however the deficiencies to be fixed portion was very subjective and I spent a number of hours creating sub categories to create an equal playing field for all. For example a project may be deficient in traffic signals, geometry, lighting, etc. Having the applicant provide specific answers to specific deficiency questions while also leaving room for additional applicant comments may be helpful. (Roadway Recon/Mod – Infrastructure Age/Condition)
- 3.
4. My scoring committee members were very conscientious about consistency and when there were questions consulted with scorers in other categories to ensure consistency.
- 5.
6. Scoring Category 5A (roadway expansion) was very iterative due to the fact that the lowest score received the max points. The scores had multiple ranges involved and I had to score ranges differently to obtain even a reasonable score distribution, which was my goal. Putting logic and reason to this was even more difficult. I would suggest revising this to mimic others where the highest value receives maximum points.
- 7.
- 8.
9. My scoring was easily prorated, so I felt comfortable with how it was done.
- 10.
11. Some applicants did not provide adequate project maps and specific location and/or function of some proposed trail projects were difficult to determine. RS applications should require a detailed project map be provided by each applicant at a scale sufficient to identify where the specific alignment of new or rehabbed trail will run relative to the roadway system...mapping the project via the on-line mapping tool was completely inadequate and led to numerous misinterpretations by the applicants w/respect to the Reg Bicycle Trans Network (as evidenced by the scoring challenges received).
12. Overall, the process was straightforward, consistent and well defined.
- 13.
- 14.
15. There was some confusion among the committee on how to distribute scores after the top scorer. A bit more guidance would be helpful.
- 16.
17.
 - Information accessibility -- Initially, I had a hard time understanding the improvements proposed for each project. Require applicants to include a description & map of proposed improvements (not just a map of the project location) and provide this to each scorer. The description & map should identify improvements by mode. Also, require applicants to include a project area map showing all bicycle connections referenced in the text describing connections.
 - Scoring Guidelines & Score Distribution -- For all criteria, be clear about prorating scores: will the maximum points be allocated for each measure or not? For pedestrian multimodal facilities & connections, correct the error in the application and scoring guidelines for the max # of points and how they should be allocated between facilities & connections (said 50, 50, should have said 75, 75). For all applications, provide more detail in the scoring guidelines for multimodal facilities & connections: make it clear that a project cannot be penalized for not having transit service in the project area and each project should be evaluated based on the quality of connections & facilities present and planned; give an example

of a scoring rubric (e.g., 75 points for significant improvements & connections for the modes present in project area, 50 points for substantial, 25 points for likely, 0 points for not likely).

18. Scoring guidelines were not clear for such an open-ended topic. The level of detail and information provided by the 1 applicant was not descriptive enough to validate or understand. There were also no other applications to compare against.
- 19.
- 20.
21. The level of information about the how the project related to equity was limited at best.
22. See #10.
23. The measure I scored was based on information provided by the Met Council staff. There was no way to check the accuracy of the information, or if it made sense. All that I had was a final number to score.
24. Multi-modal (7A/B and C)
 - For multimodal projects, there was a mismatch between the scoring criteria as written in text, as interpreted by Council staff, and the actual scoring method used. For example the "fear of punishing those without transit" and the desire to score transit separately from bike-ped is not well documented in the written text. The criteria should be clarified so there is a direct link between the written text scoring method and how the scores were applied.
 - The criteria text and requirements of applicants compared to the text for scorers could also be strengthened. In some cases, the applicant was instructed to focus on different support than what scorers were looking for.
 - Multimodal would benefit from having a map showing transit, existing bike-ped connections, future bike-ped connections, and the proposed project all on one page. Mapped information was inconsistent during this cycle.
 - In order to fully understand the project, multimodal did require a complete review of the entire application to understand the context, scope, and extent of the proposed improvements. More specific maps for each criteria or clarification of the scoring criteria may help reduce this in the future.
 - In the core, transit ridership was summed even if there was no stop available; this seems to skew totals.
 - Overall, the committee structure worked well. A handful of multimodal scorers met as a subgroup and that was also helpful.
 - Consider clearly separating new projects compared to existing/reconstruction projects or adding guidance that clarifies scoring approach so everyone is consistent.

7. Are there specific changes you would make to the qualifying criteria/requirements established to determine whether projects are eligible?

- 1.
2. I recall that there were a number of appeals because projects did not fall within the Regional Parks Plan. I recall a County rep stating the regional plan does not work for their local decisions on certain trail segments so this should be revisited for more discussion.
3. I think a stronger value should be given to bike and ped projects that create connections to other high use facilities
4. Requiring modeling to be done is an important step in determining the scope of projects, but many agencies do not have staff to do it in-house. It does not seem reasonable to require agencies to hire consultants to do it. It also seems unlikely that the Met Council staff has time to do it for agencies, but if consultant services could be provided through the Met Council, and the cost paid by the applicants, it may be a cost-effective and consistent way to get this required step completed.
5. Update guidance now that this first round of scoring has been completed. While there are some instances where categories should be scored differently, in many cases, there should be little variability
6. No.
- 7.
- 8.
9. Some people have been saying that we should eliminate categories where all the projects got the same score. I disagree with this. Having certain criteria in the scoring means that we receive projects of types that we would want to support. It is very possible that the reason everyone scored the same in category X is because the applicants knew we wanted X in any regionally-funded projects and therefore they only submitted projects with X in them. The scoring criteria help differentiate between submitted projects, certainly, but they also help differentiate between submitted and non-submitted projects and are a way for us to indicate what types of projects the region wants to support. More specifically on air quality: I wonder if there might not be a way to include some sort of bonus points or something if a project uses electric buses instead of conventional buses, for instance, or plants a rain garden, or some other "green" tech, rather than relying solely on VMT reduction.

- 10.
11. Yes, criterion #4 under Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities Projects should state "70 percent of the project cost must fall under one OR A COMBINATION of the following eligible activities:"
12. None
- 13.
- 14.
15. Drop the requirement that bridges must carry motor vehicle traffic. Often roads built to accommodate motor vehicles create barriers to biking and walking that must be overcome with bridges, yet the road project never built the bridge. Then we have to come back and beg for a fraction of funding from the trail pot when it was a road project that necessitated the bridge to begin with. You could change the requirement to be that it either carry motor vehicles or cross a roadway (perhaps meeting certain requirements, such as be a principal arterial or carry XXXXX AADT).
- 16.
17. None.
18. If a project is expanding a facility, it should be required to submit under the expansion category. It was unclear how the project under modernization fit that criteria vs. expansion.
19. Significant mapping problems may have caused some projects to have inaccurate scoring
- 20.
- 21.
22. No
23. On transit applications, several applications benefited from existing ridership, whether on other routes, or on routes that are to be replaced by the new service.
- 24.

8. Were there any issues/concerns you raised during the solicitation process that were not addressed? Please provide a brief description of the issue and how the issue was not addressed.

- 1.
- 2.
3. No, all my questions were answered in a timely manner.
4. No.
- 5.
6. The only issue I raised was that some of the applications utilized a different method to calculate their values for category 5A, namely because they were dealing with new construction. It made sense in general, but was difficult to verify. A lot of judgment had to be exercised to determine how valid these were, whereas the ones that utilized the base scoring were relatively easy to score.
- 7.
- 8.
9. Not that I can think of
- 10.
11. No.
12. None
- 13.
- 14.
15. No
16. Require that applicants show the math when calculating costs (hours, miles, etc.) and ridership. I was told that since this information was not required in the application I could not request it from the applicant. This reduced my role as reviewer/subject matter expert to simply rating figures provided by applicant.
17. None.
18. Not enough detail on how data was calculated for some criteria. There should be more clear instructions for what has to be provided to allow scorers to validate the data across projects.
- 19.
- 20.
- 21.
22. Only that I was not receiving the application information in a timely manner.
23. The application of the equity criteria in transit applications played out exactly as predicted. Scores were skewed to benefit applications for service that replaces existing service rather than new service.
24. Council staff was excellent to work with.

9. What one thing would you change about solicitation scoring above all else?

- 1.
2. Ensure applicants clearly understand all rules and criteria up front. Because of unclear directions some misinterpreted the number of points that could be received for trail segment projects. I recall a few of the appellants stating that the Met Council changed the rules of the game mid stream because of the clarification in the scoring of that measure. How can we avoid this in the future?
3. I think staff at the MET Council did a great job with this process.
- 4.
- 5.
6. See response to item #8. Again, the general method used by the exception applications made sense. It was just difficult to verify their evaluations. This made me question is how fair the scoring was to those applications that provided the materials correctly. In the end, I think it worked out, but I think this category could lend itself to some potential issues in the future if new construction is able to calculate 5A in an alternate fashion.
- 7.
- 8.
9. I would look again at scoring categories that were not easily prorated and see if we could set them up to be more easily scored.
- 10.
11. The mapping application should not be used to report a conclusion or a "score" with respect to the relationship of a proposed trail/bikeway to the RBTN. This was a chief shortcoming of the last solicitation process and led to many misinterpretations, heightened expectations, and expressed frustration from project proponents.
12. For the Congestion Reduction/Air Quality, projects with multiple locations were at an unfair disadvantage because the emissions were considered at only one location, and the cost was generally higher for those projects. Consider modifications in the future for this measure.
- 13.
- 14.
15. Clearer guidance on score distribution. I was fine with how I worked mine out, but I know others were lost.
- 16.
17. Require applicants to provide a description & map of proposed improvements (not just a map of the project location) and provide this to each scorer so we can quickly understand the proposal.
18. Emphasize regional growth centers more for transit and raise the value of criteria related to serving regional growth centers. Allow local counties and cities to designate growth centers for regional planning but set criteria for how a growth center is defined and must be planned.
19. Provide templates for scoring strategies
- 20.
- 21.
22. For my section there was some kind of glitch that kept me from having adequate time to do my review and scoring, only about one week, and it was a week that I had scheduled for vacation.
23. o Be consistent o Clarify criteria and scoring o Lean from methodology issues in 2015 o Consider how at a certain point data is dated and applicants will supplement with current information; how do these additions factor into the process
24. Multimodal would benefit from having a map showing transit, existing bike-ped connections, future bike-ped connections, and the proposed project all on one page. Mapped information was inconsistent during this cycle.

10. Please provide any comments you have on your application scoring experience. Please highlight specific issues that can be addressed in the Regional Solicitation update. Examples could include imbalances in score distribution, criteria that are too rigid or lacking in specificity, lack of clarity in the scoring guidelines, and methodology.

- 1.
- 2.
3. My measures were quite simple to calculate (population and employment) so I don't know that I would change anything
4. I expect that the "Equity" criterion will be reviewed. In looking at the results of the scoring, it seems that it did not provide any significant differentiation between projects and that using affordable housing scores did not really achieve what was intended, as it used the community as a whole for the score, rather than the more specific area of the projects.
- 5.
6. I actually enjoyed being on the scoring committee. My only issue was what I mentioned in response to item #8. I thought the committee as a whole (Expansion) did a very good job scoring the applications. Explanations and logic

were reasonable. Despite my issue in scoring, I thought the committee was very helpful in listening to my reasoning and providing feedback.

7. It would be helpful to have the project location maps in the front of the application. Had to keep flipping through many pages to find them, making the assignment of project numbers more cumbersome/time consuming than in the past. I also want to add a couple items to this form. The Risk Assessment format made it difficult to score. In the past, it was easy to score as the applicant checked a box. I understand that format could not be used for the application, which made it more time consuming and hard to follow in some cases. It was helpful when Elaine created spreadsheets to help me out; saved me a lot of time, but I still went through all of them to make sure there weren't any input errors. If there was a way to have check boxes, it would be much easier to score; not sure if that is possible. Especially when I score this criterion for all categories. We may need to add some language for project descriptions that would make it easier for Joe to create the descriptions for the STIP. Not sure how to do that right now, but would be worth discussing to save the Met Council time generating the descriptions, etc. for the STIP.
8. I found the scoring methodology much improved over previous years.
- 9.
10. My scoring area was straight forward and easy to score. I did not have any problems with the scoring criteria or information provided.
- 11.
12. The application scoring process in general was very well defined. One comment for future consideration is the method to score projects that encompass a system of routes. For those projects, there were assumptions made for the roadway selection to "define" the project, i.e. choosing the roadway with the highest functional classification. The selected roadway was then used to determine the distance to the closet parallel A-Minor Arterial or Principal Arterial.
- 13.
14. Very well managed, Well thought out, and equitable
15. It was a good process with an appropriate flex in the criteria and discussion of the projects. The application process was a big improvement.
- 16.
17. In addition to points made for question #6, refine the application text for the multimodal facilities and connections question. Ask the question about multimodal facilities first (make this question 5A) -- what is in the project area today, what improvements are proposed in conjunction with the project (make sure they are shown on a map), and how do the proposed improvements promote better integration of modes? Then ask how these proposed improvements will connect with other existing and planned multimodal facilities/services, with emphasis on existing facilities/services (becomes questions 5B & 5C).
18. There was a lack of specificity in the information requested for transit that allows reviewers to validate the information. For modernization and "improvements" criteria, nothing was required to show how improvements were calculated.
- 19.
- 20.
21. Information that is needed:
 - o Clear, direct impact on an area of concentration of low income and racial groups—service area characteristics (quarter or half-mile walking radius of station areas or stops) including demographics, housing types/affordability in area served
 - o Documented type of service improvement—schedule, timing, destinations accessible
 - o Documented access improvement and/or removal of barriers to jobs, social services, services and shopping, park/recreation, education and health facilities; immediate improvements documented; longer-term future improvements documented; local adopted comprehensive plan relationship/implementation; local survey of residents, businesses, users/customers document need/impact potential.; direct area impact and adjacent area impact.
 - o Documentation of the type of potential adverse impact issues raised by the project and recommended mitigation actions (projects should be required to examined potential impacts by adding a check list of items to show consideration that the items are not present or likely with project implementation.
22. The units for congestion reduction cost effectiveness were inverted, which made scoring more difficult. A better measure would be "delay hours reduced divided by project cost". Currently it is reported as project cost divided by delay hours reduced, which is counterintuitive and results in the highest score going to the lowest reported figure.
23. There were several areas in which it would have been helpful to see the applicant's methodology for determining a final number. There was no way to make a decision about whether or not the submission was correct or made sense. There was also a disconnect between the scoring guidelines and how scores were actually determined.
- 24.

- There are concerns about the criteria scored by Council staff; for some of the criteria, the applicants had limited control of how information was presented. –
- More weight is given to existing projects throughout the scoring process; at what point do projects that fill in gaps/missing links receive a bonus compared to other projects that replace and/or saturate areas with existing infrastructure and services.
- The approach toward asking clarifying questions of applications seemed inconsistent (who and what was asked).
- Consider how at a certain point data is dated and applicants will supplement with current information; how do these additions factor into the process. –
- More time for scoring would be helpful in the future.

DISCUSSION TOPICS TO ADDRESS FOR THE 2016 REGIONAL SOLICITATION

Based on survey responses, meeting discussions, and user feedback, staff has compiled below questions that should be addressed.

1. Should interchange projects be required to complete the Metropolitan Council/MnDOT Highway Interchange Request process prior to applying to the Regional Solicitation?
2. Should the scoring be modified to equalize the competition for projects on all roadway classifications, i.e., expander, collector, reliever, augmentor, and non-freeway principal arterial?
3. Should the scoring be modified to make railroad grade-separation projects more competitive for funding?
4. How and where should cost-effectiveness be measured?
5. Should “new roadways” be a separate application category or can the expansion scoring criteria be adjusted to so that new roadways can be more easily compared to expansions of existing roadways?
6. Should B-minor bridges be eligible for funding in the bridge category?
7. Should bundling be allowed and how wide of a geographic area can projects cover?
8. Should trail usage be based on actual counts rather than number of residents or employees within one mile of the trail facility?
9. Should the scoring for transit expansion projects further favor new riders more than existing riders?

1: INTERCHANGE APPROVALS

Should interchange projects be required to complete the Metropolitan Council/MnDOT Highway Interchange Request process prior to applying to the Regional Solicitation?

Staff's preference would be to require interchange approval prior to applying for the Regional Solicitation. However, staff wishes to hear from localities whether this is feasible for the 2016 Regional Solicitation (applications are due 7/15/16).

If local agencies do not believe that there is adequate time to go through the process before the application deadline for the 2016 Regional Solicitation, then staff could add this to the Risk Assessment measure.

Funding & Programming Committee Feedback: General consensus favored including completion of the interchange process as points to be earned in the Risk Assessment measure. There was discussion that projects would be required to go through the interchange process prior to submitting in application for the 2018 Regional Solicitation, if the process is not too time-consuming for applicants at this early stage of the project development process.

2: EQUALIZING ROADWAY CLASSIFICATIONS

Should the scoring be modified to equalize the competition for projects on all roadway functional classifications (i.e., expander, connector, reliever, augments, and non-freeway principal arterial)?

Four of the five roadway functional classifications were funded as part of the 2014 Regional Solicitation. No Connector projects were funded. Five Connector projects were applied for in the Roadway Reconstruction/Modernization category. Out of 21 applications in that category, the five projects were ranked 14th, 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st.

TAB could take several approaches to address this question. Given that TAB has decided not to fund projects based on roadway functional classification, eliminating the splitting of classifications in measure 1A (Role in the Regional Transportation System) is an option. TAB could also choose not to adjust measure 1A. TAB could guarantee a minimum of one funded project per functional classification (which would have entailed funding the 14th ranked Roadway Reconstruction/Modernization project, “leap-frogging” five projects with higher scores). Finally TAB could adjust the scoring so that each functional classification is scored separately, allowing for maximum score to be given to each functional classification in multiple categories (as is done in measure 1A).

Funding & Programming Committee Feedback: General consensus was to further explore scoring changes to make all four sub-classifications competitive for funds, as recommended in the A-Minor Arterial System Evaluation (2012).

3: ABILITY OF RAILROAD CROSSING SAFETY PROJECTS TO RECEIVE FUNDING

Should the scoring be modified to make railroad grade-separation projects more competitive for funding?

This question stems from the increase in train traffic being experienced in the Twin Cities and the impacts on highway safety and mobility at these at-grade crossings. Rail-highway grade separation projects are eligible for STP funds, but do not score well in the current scoring system when compared to other roadway projects.

As currently constructed, the safety category (worth 150 points) will not likely provide a lot of points to railroad grade-separation projects because the measure is based on the number of crashes experienced. Railroad crossings do not tend to see enough crashes to compete with intersection projects in this category.

Some options include:

1. Create a separate “railroad crossing safety” category. Staff cautions that this would create an expectation of a project from the category being funded, despite a history of very few such applications.
2. Do not adjust the scoring.
3. Adjust the safety category to allow for proactive safety elements:
 - a. Allow for a portion of the safety points to be for railroad safety
 - b. Allow for a “proactive” score that incorporates points for railroad crossing safety

Funding & Programming Committee Feedback: General consensus was that railroad crossing projects are important to the region and should continue to be eligible for funding. However, due to the already high demand for Regional Solicitation funds and the desire to simplify the process, the group did not want to change the scoring measures.

4: COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND THE IMPACT ON SCOPE CHANGES

How and where should cost-effectiveness be measured?

Concern has been raised regarding cost effectiveness criteria measurements. Some of this concern is related to the rating of scope change requests. When Council staff attempts to determine whether a modified project would have scored enough to be funded, the cost effectiveness criteria become problematic. Two scope change issues have surfaced: a) the project costs increases for the project being considered versus the other projects selected in the same solicitation; while there may be good cost data on the project requesting the change, costs of the other projects are not consistently available for comparisons and b) the potential for a scope change to be denied based on the addition of locally-funded ancillary elements, such as utility work, which are included and affect the cost effectiveness score. For these reasons staff is bringing some options and considerations forward that might be used to modify the solicitation and/or the scope change process.

1. Eliminate cost effectiveness sub-criteria.

A number of the criteria have accompanying sub-criteria to assess cost effectiveness. For example, for safety, the reduction in collisions is divided by the project cost to determine the cost effectiveness of the safety investments. Cost effectiveness has been used for many years, but has probably become more important recently due to the limited transportation funds available and the policy emphasis on lower-cost/higher-benefit projects. Using a cost effectiveness measure helps to allow a comparison of the big, high-cost project to the smaller, low-cost project. From this perspective, some form of cost effective measure seems important/appropriate for the solicitation.

2. Measure cost effectiveness only on the level of federal funds requested.

The solicitation projects include eligible and non-eligible elements. The cost effectiveness calculation uses the total project cost, which may include significant non-eligible costs. In some cases, scope change requests involve non-eligible elements such as water or sewer lines in the right-of-way that are not necessarily part of the transportation scope of work.

If only the eligible elements of the project and the associated federal funds and requested match were the basis of the cost effectiveness measure, changes to the non-eligible and, therefore, non-funded project elements could be made and not have to be analyzed from the cost effectiveness perspective. The rationale for using only federal eligible elements and cost also benefit smaller agencies that are not as able to propose larger projects with large local contributions for non-eligible elements.

3. Measure cost effectiveness based on the total score of the project.

Today there are cost effectiveness sub-criteria measures for safety, air quality, etc. A method used for bridge projects is to calculate the cost-effectiveness given the total points the project received on all criteria. These points are then divided by the total project costs. This may be more in line with the lower-cost/high-benefit policy in that it measures all aspects of the project against all costs.

4. Eliminate cost effectiveness measures from the scope change analysis.

A simple solution is to eliminate cost-effectiveness when considering a scope change. As noted above, cost effectiveness is a measure in a number of criteria. Measures like crash reduction or air quality improvements would still be used to measure benefits and changes that occur with a modified project, but the cost effectiveness measure of the same would not be considered.

5. During scope changes, conduct analysis with original project cost assumed constant.

Inflation and changes in material costs can move the cost of a project a great deal over a short time. Basing the cost effectiveness score for any air quality or collision reduction change on the original cost should reflect the true impact of the proposed changes. If the modified project changed the number of crashes reduced, the cost effectiveness calculation would be based on the original project cost.

Funding & Programming Committee Feedback: General consensus was to measure cost effectiveness only on federally-eligible project elements and to eliminate criteria-specific cost effectiveness measures and measure cost-effectiveness on the total score of the project.

5: NEW ALIGNMENTS

Should “new roadways” be a separate application category or can the expansion scoring criteria be adjusted to so that new roadways can be more easily compared to expansions of existing roadways?

In the 2014 Regional Solicitation, applications for four new roadways were submitted. These were extensions of existing highways. Several criteria were not good fits for a new highway versus the expansion or modernization of an existing highway. A number of people responding to the survey or critiquing the process suggested these problems would go away if there was a separate category for new highways.

While a new category would resolve confusion about specific criteria, there are ramifications of creating another category of highway projects. These include:

1. Creating a separate category creates the expectation that at least one, and maybe more, new highways will be funded. Having a separate category will therefore likely allocate funds for the sub-category. Historically, there are only one or two new alignment project applications in any one solicitation.
2. Creating a new category with needed criteria and scoring guidelines is time-consuming for staff and policy-makers as the solicitation package moves through the review and approval process. It also increases the number of scorers needed.

Staff recognizes the confusion in trying to fit the existing criteria to a new highway. Staff believes the criteria could be modified so that while the answers for a new highway proposal would be different than for an existing highway proposal, they will be comparable and allow a fair distribution of scores. An alternative process will be needed for each of these six measures: Current daily person throughput, heavy commercial traffic, infrastructure age, congestion reduction, emissions reduction, and safety.

In most applications for new highways or alignments, existing highways serve the current trips. The applicant will be asked to identify the highways that serve these trips today (which may or may not be “A” Minors) and provide data similar to that needed for project applications on existing alignments. Of course, if the Council staff is providing this data, the applicant would only have to identify the highways that provide the function today. As an example, the Commercial Vehicle Traffic criteria require counts. The applicant would identify points on the existing highways that provide for this traffic today.

If more than one highway serves the trips, then counts could be summed, though only a percentage of the trips from each roadway would divert to the new roadway.

In the case of Daily Person Throughput, which includes the current average annual daily traffic volume x 1.3 (persons per vehicle) plus the average annual transit ridership, this calculation is made by Metropolitan Council staff. Again, data from the existing highway(s) that are serving this trip as noted above would be used.

In the case of infrastructure age, use of existing highways is not as straight forward. The condition of the existing highways will not be improved, but their condition can still be used as a surrogate for a problem. Parallel routes may be able to be used since traffic will be diverted from these existing roadways, thereby extending the useful life of these facilities.

Staff believes the Solicitation process can be made fair to new highway projects without creating a new category. All criteria for the highway expansion category will be reviewed and modifications of the appropriate criteria for a new highway will be developed. These modifications will be brought to the F&PC as the Solicitation is revised for 2016.

Funding & Programming Committee Feedback: General consensus was not to create a new category for new roadways. Staff will bring adjusted roadway measures to a future meeting that account for new alignments.

6: BRIDGE ELIGIBILITY

Should B-minor bridges be eligible for funding in the bridge category?

Eligibility for bridges has been restricted to “A” minor arterials for a number of years. Staff is not certain when this started, but records back to 2003 show that only “A” bridges were eligible.

Over the five solicitations dating back to 2003, a total of 42 bridge projects were submitted and 23 projects were funded. In those solicitations, \$10 million in federal funds was designated for bridges in each solicitation. The level of funding was based on a federal designation that a specific level of the STP funds would go to bridges. This changed with MAP-21. The designated categories of bridges and other Federal Aid roads were consolidated into the National Highway Performance Program (NHPP). This Act also reduced the total federal funds coming to the region from \$161.4 million every two years to \$150 million.

In the 2014 Regional Solicitation Evaluation, an early proposal was to eliminate the bridge category completely. Bridges would not compete in their own category but would be eligible if they were part of a highway expansion or modernization project. Due to significant support from the regional partners, the TAB maintained bridges as a roadway sub-category but only allowed “A” minor arterials to qualify.

In the 2014 Solicitation, six bridge projects were submitted with a combined federal funding request of \$24.7 million. This was about 9% of the total \$280 million requested. One bridge was selected in 2014 to receive \$7 million in federal funds. The estimated total cost of the project was over \$60 million. This bridge funding represented about 5% of the federal funds allotted in the 2014 Solicitation. Over the 2003 to 2011 period, 6.4% of the federal funds were allocated to bridges. On average from 2003 to 2011, eight bridges were submitted for each solicitation.

Staff recommends continuing to limit the Bridge category to “A” minor arterials.

Funding & Programming Committee Feedback: While there were members that expressed a desire for expanding bridge eligibility, general consensus was to leave the A-minor requirement as is. There are plenty of unfunded A-Minor bridges as exhibited by the fact that TAB only funded 1 of 6 A-Minor bridges in the last solicitation.

7: BUNDLING AND GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Should bundling be allowed and how wide of a geographic area can projects cover?

The 2014 Regional Solicitation provided for “bundling” of similar projects:

“Project applicants can also ‘bundle’ two or more projects together to meet the funding minimum. Bundled projects must fall into one of three types:

1. Projects located along the same corridor (e.g., filling multiple trail gaps along a trail corridor)
2. Systemwide improvements (e.g., retiming traffic signals across a defined jurisdiction)
3. Similar improvements within a concentrated geographic area (e.g., adding benches along the sidewalks in a downtown area)

Communities may want to consider using joint powers agreements for implementing bundled projects in two or more jurisdictions. Bundling of independent projects that can each meet the project minimum and are not related to one another as described above is not allowed.”

No bundled projects that meet the guidelines above have been submitted in any Regional Solicitation. Two projects were submitted in 2014, but, due to the size of the individual elements, they did not meet this definition and were disqualified.

Another project also raised issues about scoring; a Roadway System Management project that would allow retiming of signals on an unknown number of corridors and cities throughout the region.

The concern with both the bundling projects and systemwide improvements is how they would score given location-specific criteria. In the Bicycle/Pedestrian category, which may draw interest for bundling, four of the six criteria are tied closely to location. In the Roadway System Management category, six of the eight criteria are tied closely to location. In some cases the data could be averaged to give a score, but for the connections to job concentrations and equity they would be inconsistent with the intent of the criteria.

Given that there has never been a qualified bundling project submitted in the Regional Solicitation, staff believes eliminating this would simplify the solicitation and reduce the complexity of scoring.

In projects that provide similar systemwide improvements, staff would like to explore a different solution. The definition of the “defined jurisdiction” or the “concentrated geographic area” would be restricted so the various criteria could be scored reflective of the intent of the adopted criteria. As examples of a “defined area”, a downtown area, defined area, or length along a singular trail corridor could be used.

The System Management application submitted in 2014 and disqualified could not be addressed in this manner. The application would have provided funds to hire consultants to undertake signal retiming and upgrading on various county-owned A-Minors in all seven counties. Specific locations were not identified since this was intended to provide the assistance needed for smaller traffic system management projects, but under one umbrella contract that MnDOT would administer. Staff believes this is a unique project that may need to be considered for funding as such by the TAB.

Funding & Programming Committee Feedback: General consensus was to continue to allow bundling and to make sure that geographic areas are defined with census tracts..

8: TRAIL USAGE

Should trail usage be based on actual counts rather than number of residents or employees within one mile of the trail facility?

As part of the Regional Solicitation Redesign in 2014, some bicycle and pedestrian technical workgroup members requested that project usage should be measured by doing actual trail counts. However, the group noted that the collection equipment, techniques, and methodologies were not ready to be deployed on a regional level for the Regional Solicitation. Instead, the group recommended that people and jobs within one mile of the proposed trail be used as a proxy to measure potential usage. As part of the recent online survey, people asked for a better way to measure usage.

The 2016 Regional Solicitation could respond to this concern in several ways:

1. Leave the measure as is based on the idea that population and employment are the best available indicators of potential trail usage.
2. Use ridership counts. While automated counting may be a possibility in the future, staff would recommend that manual counts be taken on each proposed trail. If the project is an improvement to an existing trail, then counts should be taken on the actual trail. If the proposed project is a new segment, then a count should be completed at the highest-volume connecting trail facility (i.e., likely an end point of the proposed trail). Manual counts should be taken from 4 PM to 6 PM on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday during the application period. The number of users counted during the two-hour window would then be inserted into the application (i.e., the number would not be adjusted to a daily count). This same methodology can be used for any Pedestrian Facilities projects.
3. Design a qualitative method for determining a score for potential usage.

Funding & Programming Committee Feedback: General consensus was to leave the measure as is.

9: EXISTING VS. NEW TRANSIT RIDERS

Should the scoring for transit expansion projects further favor new riders more than existing riders?

In the survey, concern was expressed that awarding a lot of points to existing transit riders under-values expansion of the transit system; expansion is not meant to “capture” riders that already ride, but to create new ridership. This concern was in part based on the survey response that rewarding existing ridership “seems inconsistent with Federal guidelines for CMAQ funds, which are intended to help start up viable, new transit services.”

[Interim Program Guidance Under MAP-21](#) states: “In using CMAQ funds for *operating assistance*, the intent is to help start up viable new transportation services that can demonstrate air quality benefits and eventually cover costs as much as possible.” Operating assistance is not eligible to maintain existing service and the Regional Solicitation does not provide operating assistance to existing routes.

Staff believes, therefore, that adding new riders to existing routes is as viable as adding riders via new routes when it comes to CMAQ funding. The question still remains, however, whether existing riders are weighted more than they should be. For CMAQ, the key objective is to reduce congestion and air pollution.

This issue relates to the “Usage” criterion. The three measures are:

- A. Cost effectiveness per rider. This includes new and existing riders. 105 points
- B. Operating cost effectiveness, which is found by dividing new annual operation cost by new annual ridership. 70 points
- C. Project cost effectiveness per new rider. 175 points.

New riders go further toward achieving CMAQ goals of reducing congestion and improving air quality than do existing riders. At present, 245 of the 350 points awarded in Usage are directed entirely toward new ridership. The other 105 points are awarded for each existing and new rider (i.e., total ridership). Therefore, as shown in the below table, only 30% of the usage criterion is dedicated to total ridership; a portion of which is existing riders.

	2014
A: Cost Effectiveness per New/Existing Rider	105 (30%)
B: Operating Cost Effectiveness per New Rider	70 (20%)
C: Project Cost Effectiveness per New Rider	175 (50%)
Total New-Only Measures	245 (70%)

Staff recommends continued inclusion of this weight for existing riders because there is value in providing improved service to existing riders.

Funding & Programming Committee Feedback: General consensus was not reached. The 2014 transit Scoring Committee members will be invited to participate in a one-time work group to try to come to consensus and address other transit/TDM issues.