

ACTION TRANSMITTAL No. 2016-54

Date: September 22, 2016

To: Technical Advisory Committee

Prepared by: Jonathan Ehrlich, Planning Analyst (651-602-1408)

Subject: Ongoing Funding Strategy for the Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI).

Requested action: Recommend approval of a funding strategy for the TBI over the next ten years.

Recommended motion:

TAC recommends that TAB allocate \$2.7 million of federal Regional Solicitation funds to the Travel Behavior Inventory for the first six years of the program; and direct staff to develop a memorandum of agreement for future funding on the principle of equal funding shares between the Council, MnDOT, and TAB.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF ACTION: The Metropolitan Council, like all large MPOs, maintains a regional transportation forecasting model. This model is regularly updated to reflect changes in regional demographics, transportation networks, and observed travel patterns and behaviors. Federal laws and regulations require the regular maintenance of the model for planning, environmental, and environmental justice purposes.

The regional model is used by the Council to demonstrate conformity of the regional TIP and TPP to the Clean Air Act, enabling federal transportation funds to be spent in the region. The regional travel model is used for project forecasting by MnDOT, Metro Transit, counties and cities. The information put out by the model is used for project justification, estimation of environmental impacts, and for design. The right-sizing of major infrastructure projects, such as the TH 169/I-494 interchange in Hennepin County is an important use of the model. The Council's role in project forecasting is to maintain the model and its input data, provide technical support to users of the model, and review model validation and results. The credibility of model forecasts is crucial to major highway and transit projects; models that lack credibility and currency expose major projects to litigation risk.

The region's model is only as good as the data that is used to develop it. The program used to collect our region's data is known as the Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI) and has been an on-going data collection program since 1949. Traditionally the TBI data have come from a decennial household travel survey and a transit on board survey every five years. From 2015-2016 the Council engaged a consultant to make recommendations for the future structure and frequency of the TBI program considering the needs of the model, contemporary policy concerns, the pace at which changes in travel patterns now occur and advances in technology. The work of the consultant was overseen by regional stakeholders, including members of TAC.

RELATIONSHIP TO REGIONAL POLICY: The regional travel demand model is used by all major transportation stakeholders across the Twin Cities and is a requirement of the TPP and TIP to determine air quality conformity.

STAFF ANALYSIS: Previous conversations with the TAC and TAB indicate a high level of interest in maintaining a current and useful model for regional use. Staff was directed to identify a funding mechanism that keeps the TBI data current and relevant to produce the highest benefit for the model to the region. Instead of conducting one household travel survey every ten years and a transit on board survey every five years, the proposal is for a continuous program sampling the region every two years plus transit, airport, and University of Minnesota emphasis areas on a regular basis and continuing updates to the regional model for an estimated cost of \$2.5 million every two years. This action would also establish an agreed upon funding formula for the future.

The recommended motion involves splitting the cost equally between three partners: the Metropolitan Council, MnDOT, and TAB through the Regional Solicitation. This is a total of \$850,000 per participant per two year cycle.

Taking this action at this time fits into the funding cycle for TAB's 2016 solicitation round. However this falls behind MnDOT's funding cycle and therefore the MnDOT share would be funded by a one-time funding available from the Council and a slightly higher share from TAB (\$1.0 M versus \$850,000) for the first two-year cycle of the TBI data collection.

Action is needed at this time to advance the TBI program to ensure continued reliable, trusted results for the region's transportation partners.

ROUTING

TO	ACTION REQUESTED	COMPLETION DATE
Technical Advisory Committee	Review & Recommend	
Transportation Advisory Board	Review & Approve	