

Transportation Advisory Board

of the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities

INFORMATION ITEM

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TO: Technical Advisory Committee

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SUBJECT: 2020 Regional Solicitation: Simple Changes

Feedback collected during and following the 2018 Regional Solicitation points to several potential improvements to the process. Some of these, including Equity (Measure 3A in all categories) and inclusion of the Regional Bicycle Barriers Study in the Gaps and Barriers measure (Measure 4A in the Multiuse Trail and Bicycle Facilities category) are ongoing and not included in the below discussion.

General Considerations

Federal Minimum and Maximum Funding amounts

Since the 2018 Regional Solicitation, several suggestions have been made regarding changes to the minimum and maximum federal funding awards. This includes potentially reducing the maximum Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities award and increasing the maximum Roadway Expansion reward.

Modes	Application Categories	Minimum Federal	Maximum Federal
Roadways Including Multimodal Elements	Roadway Expansion	\$1,000,000	\$7,000,000
	Roadway Recon / Mod and Spot Mobility	\$1,000,000	\$7,000,000
	Traffic Management Technologies	\$250,000	\$7,000,000
	Bridge Rehabilitation/Replacement	\$1,000,000	\$7,000,000
Transit and TDM Projects	Transit Expansion	\$500,000	\$7,000,000
	Transit Modernization	\$100,000	\$7,000,000
	Travel Demand Management (TDM)	\$75,000	\$500,000
Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities	Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities	\$250,000	\$5,500,000
	Pedestrian Facilities	\$250,000	\$1,000,000
	Safe Routes to School	\$150,000	\$1,000,000

ADA Transition Plan - Qualifying

In 2018, a public agency needed to have an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition plan or “be substantially working towards...” completion to qualify. The plan then, and now, was to require a completed plan.

Origination of the Project

A new qualifying criterion is proposed that would require applicants to describe how the transportation problem was identified at the project location, how the potential solution was identified instead of other options, and the public involvement completed to date on the project.

Some Funding & Programming Committee members expressed concern with the effort potentially required to complete this response. Staff envisions it as a paragraph. This would be a “trial run” in 2020 that would not result in any disqualifications.

Leveraging Local and Other Resources

The recent survey responses included some sentiment for awarding points to applications that have leveraged other funds. This could be a new measure under the Cost Effectiveness criterion. Some questions about this include:

- In which application categories would this be included? Only roadway applications?
- How many points would it be worth? It is currently shown as a part of the existing cost effectiveness measure where applicants would get the higher of the two scores (i.e., cost effectiveness or leveraging other resources)

Funding & Programming Committee members expressed sentiment that this would only be appropriate for the roadway funding categories.

Multimodal Elements Scoring Tweak

Many funding categories include within their Multimodal Elements and Existing Conditions measure the following: “Scorers should make sure that new multimodal elements described in the response are accounted for on the cost estimate form earlier in the application.” This has been confusing to scorers, who can score the measure just as well by reading the narrative. The application may still ask for inclusion of these elements in the cost estimate as a way to track multimodal investment requests, but it should be removed from the scoring guidance.

Roadways

Spot Mobility Category

Spot mobility projects (e.g., at-grade intersection improvements, turn lanes, roundabouts, reduced conflict intersections) can serve as cost-effective improvements to regional mobility and tie directly to the TPP. A \$3.5 million maximum award would be sufficient to fund most such projects, but more input is requested.

Funding & Programming members suggested that this category could serve to provide some geographic balance. There was also discussion that this category could have some overlap with MnDOT’s Local Partnership Program (LPP), which funds low-cost mobility projects. LPP is about \$3 million annual, funding six-to-10 projects.

Bridges

The Bridge application category is proposed to be folded into the Roadway Reconstruction and Modernization application category. Bridges would remain eligible for funding.

While bridge projects and other projects could be scored differently within measures when appropriate, Funding & Programming Committee members questioned the ability of bridge applications to compete with other roadway projects. Currently, infrastructure condition is worth 400 points in the Bridge category, as opposed to only 150 points in the Roadway Reconstruction and Modernization category. Other measures are likely to favor non-bridge projects. Staff will analyze the two applications closer to see where additional adjustments might be made if they are merged into one application type. If the bridge category remains, members agreed that removing the \$10M set-aside for bridge projects would be helpful in putting together a variety of funding scenarios for TAB. This change would provide more flexibility and be consistent with the way other application categories are treated.

Congestion Management Process

Since the previous Regional Solicitation, the Congestion Management Process (CMP) Plan has been completed and could be included as part of Measure 1A, which measures level of congestion in the Roadway Expansion and Roadway Reconstruction/Modernization categories.

Connection to Total Jobs, Manufacturing/Distribution Jobs, and Students

Survey feedback indicated that the “**Connection to Total Jobs, Manufacturing/Distribution Jobs, and Students**” measure within the “Role in the Regional Transportation System and Economy” criterion could be removed from roadways funding categories, given that the distance traveled via automobile tends to be longer than by bus or non-motorized transportation. Funding & Programming members were split on this idea.

Multiuise Trails and Bicycle Facilities – Prioritizing Criteria and Measures

Measure 2B: Snow and Ice Control

The measure reads: “Confirm that the applicant and/or controlling jurisdiction has a maintenance plan or other policy that mandates snow and ice control to promote year-round usage.” Fifty points were awarded for inclusion of (or reference to) a maintenance plan or policy for snow-removal for year-round use. Otherwise, no points were awarded.

This was a new measure in 2018 and was included after lengthy discussion that included the possibility of using it as a qualifying criterion. Its inclusion was based on the notion that the trails funded by TAB should be for year-round bicycle and pedestrian transportation. Applicants and scorers found the measure confusing in terms of what documentation should be provided and where to draw the line between a scoring and non-scoring application.

Possible Solutions:

- Allow for partial scoring, as opposed to the “all-or-none” method used in 2018.
- Other ways to clarify or specify what needs to be provided and what results in points?

Funding & Programming Committee members shared various thoughts on this issue. These include: the language needs to be more specific regarding what the applicant needs to provide; the category should remain an all-or-none score; a letter stating that the specific trail will be maintained in the winter should be provided; and snow removal should be a qualifying requirement. There was a level of agreement that the applicant should submit a letter from the agency responsible for trail maintenance that commits them snow and ice control if awarded funding.

Safe Routes to School Measures

Measure 2B: Student Population

The measure reads: “Student population within one mile of the elementary school, middle school, or high school served by the project.” In 2018, applicants interpreted this in various ways:

- Students at the school(s) in question
- Children in the age group of the school(s) in question
- Children between 5 and 18 years old
- All children below 18 years old.
- Within a mile of the project vs. within a mile of the school(s) (i.e., students to the west of a school are not served by a project to the east of the school)

The inconsistency was not able to be reconciled during the scoring period and was therefore nullified. Options to clarify one consistent way to measure this include:

- Students at the school(s) in question. Are schools able to track how many students live within a mile?
 - Within a mile of the school(s)
 - Within a mile of the project
 - Within a mile of both the school(s) and project
- Children in the age group of the school(s) in question
- Children (between 5 and 18 years or 18 and below)
- Total population