
*Transportation Advisory Board
of the Metropolitan Council*

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, February 3, 2021
9:00 A.M.**

Members Present: Jon Solberg, Joe MacPherson, Erin Laberee, Lisa Freese, Lyndon Robjent, Chad Ellos, Brian Isaacson/Scott Mareck, Emily Jorgensen, Andrew Witter, Elaine Koutsoukos, Steve Peterson, Michael Larson, Innocent Eyoh, Bridget Rief, Matt Fyten, Peter Dahlberg, Danny McCullough, Karl Keel, Ken Ashfeld, Charlie Howley, Paul Oehme, Michael Thompson, Kim Lindquist, Jim Kosluchar, Jenifer Hager, Paul Mogush, Bill Dermody, Paul Kurtz

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Solberg at 9:05 a.m. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held via video conference.

2. Approval of Agenda

The Committee approved the agenda with no changes. Therefore, no vote was needed.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 6, 2021 meeting were presented to the Committee for consideration. Chair Solberg noted an error in the minutes. The minutes reflected Mr. Oehme as chair of the Funding and Programming Committee instead of Mr. Thompson, who is the current chair. A motion to approve the amended minutes reflecting the correct Funding and Programming chair was made by Mr. Isaacson and seconded by Mr. MacPherson. Motion carried.

(Meeting minutes for the March 4, 2020, minutes will be presented for approval at a future committee meeting.)

4. TAB Report

TAB Coordinator Ms. Koutsoukos provided a summary of the January 20, 2021 meeting. Ms. Koutsoukos provided an overview of the new TAB appointments.

5. Committee Reports

1. Executive Committee (Jon Solberg, Chair)

Chair Solberg reported that the Executive Committee met prior to the meeting. The discussion primarily focused on membership of the TAC subcommittees and a review of the meeting agenda. Chair Solberg noted that the subcommittee membership had been finalized.

2. TAC Action Items

- a) **2021-10: 2021-2024 Streamlined TIP Amendment for MnDOT: US 212 Lighting Improvement**

Mr. Barbeau presented this item, noting that MnDOT was requesting an amendment to the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include funding for lighting upgrades on US 212. MnDOT was awarded funding from the 2020 Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) solicitation to upgrade the lighting and anticipates that the project will begin prior to the approval of the 2022-2025 TIP.

A motion to recommend approval of the TIP amendment was made by Mr. Dermody and seconded by Mr. Ellis. Motion carried.

b) 2021-11: 2021-2024 Streamlined TIP Amendment for Richfield: Railroad Gate Installation

Mr. Barbeau presented this item, which was requested by the City of Richfield. The city requests an amendment to the 2021-2024 TIP to add an additional location and associated cost increase to the West 77th Street railroad gate installation project. The project would include the addition of upgraded detection circuitry adjacent to West 76th Street. Mr. Barbeau noted that the project was not funded by the Regional Solicitation. The total cost of the project would increase from \$225,000 to \$350,142.

A motion to recommend approval of the request was made by Ms. Rief and seconded by Mr. Eyoh. Motion carried.

3. Planning Committee (Emily Jorgensen, Chair)

a) 2021-04: Proposed 2021 Safety Targets

TAC Planning Chair Jorgensen introduced Heidi Schallberg and Jed Hansen, who presented the item to the Committee. Ms. Schallberg informed the Committee that the Council, as the MPO for the region, is required to adopt performance measure targets for five safety performance measures on an annual basis. The measures include the number and rate of fatal crashes, serious injury crashes, and bicycle/pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries. The MPO has the option to set specific targets for the region or may choose to support the statewide target, which is set by MnDOT.

Ms. Schallberg noted that in past years the Council used the same methodology used by MnDOT but applied to the totals for the region. However, in the setting of 2020 targets, this practice would have resulted in an increase in the fatal and serious injury targets. This was of concern and, as part of the 2020 target-setting process, TAC recommended establishing a safety performance work group to recommend a different methodology for calculating future targets.

The work group met in December of 2020 to discuss the 2021 targets and recommended crafting a methodology that acknowledges the 2020-2024 Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), which was recently finalized by MnDOT. The Plan has a long-term goal of zero deaths and serious injuries in the state and establishes a five-year statewide goal to reduce traffic fatalities to 225 or fewer and serious injuries to 980 by 2025. The recommended action of the work group is to carry over the 2020 targets for 2021, then to reduce the targets annually to reach the region's share of the 2025 SHSP goals.

A motion to recommend approval of the request was made by Ms. Hager and seconded by Ms. Freese. Motion carried.

4. Funding and Programming Committee (Michael Thompson, Chair)

a) 2021-05: Scope Change Request for St. Louis Park's CSAH 25/Beltline Blvd Pedestrian Improvements

Mr. Thompson presented this item, noting that the City of St. Louis Park is requesting a scope change for the CSAH 25/Beltway Blvd pedestrian improvement project. This project was funded in part using 2016 Regional Solicitation funds.

Since the original funding award of this project, two segments of the original project have been included in other projects. The proposed scope change would focus efforts on the construction of the remaining project segments and eliminate these two segments. This would ensure the entire project as originally outlined in the application would be constructed.

The cost to complete the remaining segments is \$820,457, an increase from the \$700,000 originally estimated to complete the project. The City is proposing to reduce the amount of federal funds on the project by \$11,760 due to the reduced size of the project using federal funds, though the Funding and Programming Committee recommends no reduction in federal funds.

A motion to recommend approval of the request with no federal funding reduction was made by Mr. McCollough and seconded by Mr. Isaacson. Motion carried.

b) 2021-06: TIP Amendment for St. Louis Park: CSAH 25/Beltline Blvd Pedestrian Improvements

Mr. Thompson noted that this item was related to 2021-05 in that it was the official request to amend the TIP to reflect the scope change request.

A motion to recommend approval of the TIP amendment request was made by Mr. MacPherson and seconded by Mr. Oehme. Motion carried.

c) 2021-08: Highway 252 Program Year Change

Mr. Thompson noted that the City of Brooklyn Center, City of Brooklyn Park, Hennepin County, and MnDOT are requesting an exception to TAB's Program Year Policy. The project partners desire to move four awarded Regional Solicitation projects to 2026 to align with construction of the larger MnDOT-led Highway 252/I-94 project. Council staff has determined that this delay will not cause any concerns related to spending funds in the upcoming years. MnDOT has changed the project environmental document from an environmental assessment worksheet (EAW) to an environmental impact statement (EIS), which has pushed the project letting beyond their respective current program years. Mr. Thompson clarified that the action is to provide a list of pros and cons to TAB. There is concern with this activity diverting from the program year policy, which allows a one-time, one-year extension. The Funding & Programming Committee suggested that consideration should be given to what exceptions to those rules should be allowed.

Mr. MacPherson inquired as to how this impacts funding in fiscal year 2022. Mr. Peterson replied that the 2022 and 2023 funding gaps are going to have to be filled regardless of what decision is made on this item. Applicants from the 2020 Regional Solicitation can proceed earlier if needed to fill the need.

Mr. Robjent said that two of these projects will be implemented ten years after original application and that an evaluation of the policy is needed. He added that Regional Solicitation projects being included in very large projects is becoming more prevalent. Ms. Koutsoukos added that the risk assessment could be used to consider whether such tie-ins cause risk. She added that independent utility is a qualifying criterion that could be used for applications like this.

Mr. Keel said that it is reasonable for an extension to be granted for a project when there are changes out of the applicant's control.

Mr. MacPherson inquired as to how \$26 million for 2026 is going to impact the next Solicitation and whether MnDOT can use other funds to fund the projects. Mr. Solberg responded that while the answer to this is not certain, it may be difficult to use other MnDOT funds. Ms. Koutsoukos noted that 2023 is overprogrammed to the point that most of the funding is not taking away from the next Regional Solicitation.

Mr. Eyoh noted that there is a large population of people of color nearby and the more in-depth environmental process will allow for valuable public involvement and engagement.

Mr. Marek said that given that the need for this request was created by MnDOT, Ramsey County supports MnDOT finding a way to cash-flow the change. Chair Solberg said that that has come up several times and will move to TAB as a consideration.

Mr. Barbeau summarized the comments to forward to TAB, which included emphasis on the long-term impact of the decision on the policy. He noted that there appears to be a struggle between the policy as written and the fact that external forces are causing the need to extend project construction dates. A longer-term examination of the Program Year Policy is needed. He continued by noting that the increased air quality review is valuable.

Chair Solberg noted that concerns include what type of projects could be considered exceptions; how independent utility relates to larger projects; and the amount of funding that could be displaced in 2026 and how to reduce that impact. Mr. Peterson added that a slight adjustment is needed to the "pro" statement in the memo that there is no financial impact to the overall program.

Chair Solberg noted that he will bring the finding and discussion to TAB for consideration.

d) 2021-09: CSAH 103 Program Year Change

Mr. Thompson presented this item, noting that based on issues with BNSF railroad, the City of Brooklyn Park is requesting an exception to TAB's Program Year Policy. The City would like to move two projects back three years each to align with the construction of the Blue Line Extension. He said that there is some uncertainty with the Blue Line Extension's schedule and completion. The alteration of funding years can work out in a similar manner as with the Highway 252 Program Year Change. This project would not be impacted by right-of-way changes related to the railroad.

Jeff Holstein from the City of Brooklyn Park participated in the discussion and noted that neither of these projects has received a program year extension. He added that the City of Brooklyn Park will be participating in two large regional projects in the same timeframe which, without the extension, could put a strain on the City.

Mr. Keel asked whether the Blue Line Extension is actively under development. Mr. Holstein replied that the project is progressing and hopes to finalize an alternative to the BNSF segment by the end of 2021 in order to allow the project to start in 2024 or 2025.

Mr. Robjant asked whether the applicant could apply for the projects in the next cycle. Ms. Koutsoukos responded that one of the two projects is requesting 2025 funding, while the next cycle is for 2026 and

2027. She added that the timing of this request works out well because Regional Solicitation projects are being programmed and there is flexibility regarding program years.

Mr. Robjent asked whether the Blue Line Extension is likely to be underway in 2024 and 2025. Cole Hiniker of the Metropolitan Council responded that the expectation is a new segment alignment will be determined by the end of 2021. However, he noted that any other design complications could impact the overall timeline.

Chair Solberg introduced a motion that the Committee forward the comments to TAB. The motion carried.

6. Information Items

1. 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Development Schedule

Mr. Barbeau presented this item. He explained that the TIP development schedule is changing to enable the public comment period to start and end earlier so that staff has time to compile public comments.

7. Agency Reports

No agency reports.

8. Other Business and Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:49 a.m.

Prepared by:

Dave Burns