

Minutes

TAB Technical Advisory Committee



Meeting Date: October 5, 2022

Time: 9:00 AM

Location: Virtual

Members Present:

- Jon Solberg, Chair, MnDOT
- Joe MacPherson, Anoka Co
- Lyndon Robjent, Carver Co
- Erin Laberee, Dakota Co
- Brian Isaacson, Vice Chair, Ramsey Co
- Chad Ellos, Hennepin Co
- Lisa Freese, Scott Co
- Lyssa Leitner, Washington Co
- Andrew Witter, 7W

- Karl Keel, Bloomington
- Charlie Howley, Chanhassen
- Robert Ellis, Eden Prairie
- Brandon Brodhag, Fridley
- Paul Oehme, Lakeville
- Ken Ashfeld, Maple Grove
- Marcus Culver, Roseville
- Michael Thompson, Plymouth
- Jenifer Hager, Minneapolis
- Jim Voll, Minneapolis
- Paul Kurtz, Saint Paul
- Bill Dermody, Saint Paul

- Steve Peterson, Council MTS
- Michael Larson, Council CD
- Elaine Koutsoukos, TAB
- Innocent Eyoh, MPCA
- Bridget Rief, MAC
- Matt Fyten, STA
- Adam Harrington, Metro Transit
- Praveena Pidaparathi, MnDOT
- Colleen Eddy, DEED
- Vacant, MN DNR
- Danny McCullough, Bicycle
- Vacant, Pedestrian
- Vacant, FHWA (ex-officio)

= present

Call to Order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Solberg called the regular meeting of the TAB Technical Advisory Committee to order at 9:03 a.m.

Approval of Agenda

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

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Isaacson and seconded by Eyoh to approve the minutes of the September 7, 2022, regular meeting of the TAB Technical Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

Public Comment on Committee Business

None.

TAB Report

Koutsoukos reported on the September 21, 2022, Transportation Advisory Board meeting.

Business – Committee Reports

Executive Committee (Jon Solberg, Chair)

Chair Solberg reported that the TAC Executive Committee met prior to the TAC meeting and discussed the agenda items.

Solberg suggested that Barbeau present all three TIP amendments and that a motion be made to recommend approval of all three.

1. [2022-40: Streamlined 2023-2026 TIP Amendment: Minnesota River Greenway](#) (Joe Barbeau, MTS)

Barbeau said that this request is to add local work to the Regional Solicitation project. The added work is a bridge a third- to half-mile away from the project and is being added to be a part of the same contract. All funding for the additional scope is local.

2. [2022-41: Streamlined 2023-2026 TIP Amendment: SouthWest Transit Electric Buses and Charging Station](#) (Joe Barbeau, MTS)

Barbeau said that the requested action involves adding a federally awarded project to purchase two electric buses and a charging station for SouthWest Transit. The project was originally programmed in the 2022-2025 TIP but needs to be moved forward. The delay is because the project is part of a new program and it took longer than expected to determine eligible costs and that Metro Transit will administer the funds.

Solberg asked Fyten to provide an explanation for what caused the delay. Fyten replied that it was determined to have the funds flow through Metropolitan Council rather than MnDOT and that, along with discussion of eligible costs and re-scoping of the grant, caused the delay.

3. [2022-36: Streamlined 2023-2026 TIP Amendment: Electric Bus Purchase](#) (Joe Barbeau, MTS)

Barbeau said that this request involves the purchase of eight electric buses awarded the Federal Transit Administration's Low- or No-Emissions Vehicle Program. This project was added to the 2022-2025 TIP but FTA informed the sponsor that it would be unable to award funding prior to approval of the 2023-2026 TIP and it therefore needs to be added to that TIP.

It was moved by Keel and seconded by Isaacson recommend adoption of the TIP amendment requests in action transmittals 2022-40, 2022-41, and 2022-42. **Motion carried** unanimously.

Planning Committee/TPP Technical Working Group (Scott Mareck, Chair)

Mareck reported that the TAC Planning meeting was cancelled in September and will also be cancelled in October. He provided an update on the TPP Technical Working Group meeting that occurred in September. He and vice chair Angie Stenson discussed A-minor arterial performance measure data for 2023 with staff. Robjent suggested that a project be included in the UPWP if there is funding available. Peterson said that the project would need to be scoped.

Funding & Programming (Paul Oehme, Vice Chair)

Oehme chaired the September Funding & Programming Committee meeting. He reported that an additional Regional Solicitation scoring challenge was brought to the committee, which declined to make a scoring change.

Information

1. Highway Safety Improvement Program (Kaare Festvog, MnDOT)

Festvog summarized the currently ranked Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) applications. The draft includes some changes from when it was presented to the Funding & Programming Committee. Three projects were not scored on time and at least one is likely to be funded. Additional IIJA funding has led to significantly more projects being funded than in previous years. The list will hopefully be finalized prior to the next meeting.

2. [Regional Solicitation Funding Scenarios](#) (Steve Peterson, Met Council)

Peterson summarized the two proposed Regional Solicitation funding scenarios, each of which is paired with two potential scenarios for how to spend the Carbon Reduction Program funds. He

said that individual projects will not be funded by both HSIP and Solicitation funds; that with the new On-System Bridge program, all bridge applications are shown as funded; and that staff is seeking clarity on whether to waive the rule only allowing \$32M on BRT projects. Carbon Reduction funds are included for 2023 and 2024 because of how immediate those funds are. How to distribute 2025 to 2027 funds can be discussed later. He also discussed the possibility that some Unique Projects money could be used to fund capital projects. He added that TAB is interested in receiving a list of pros and cons about each scenario from the technical committees.

Isaacson asked whether staff will make a Unique Projects recommendation. Peterson replied that it will not; though it provided technical comments to the scoring group. Koutsoukos added that that group meets soon.

Leitner provided suggestions for clarifying the colors used in the table. She asked whether the question of removing the bus rapid transit (BRT) maximum is because of the additional funds, to which Peterson replied in the affirmative. Leitner asked why the scenarios show funding all travel demand management (TDM) projects. Peterson replied that the first five projects are within the standard TDM award amount and the other two would be funded from the extra transit money.

McCullough stated that some projects shown as funded have significantly lower scores than projects in other categories shown as funded. He asked why an additional Roadway Reconstruction/Modernization project is shown in the Bicycle/Pedestrian-Heavy Scenario versus the Midpoint Scenario. Peterson said that the latter has two fewer Strategic Capacity projects, and the intent was to show a different tact within roadways in the two scenarios.

Koutsoukos summarized comments provided by TAB. TAB provided no recommendation on distribution within modes. TAB recommended that there not be a separate solicitation for the Carbon Reduction program. Members suggested that materials indicate any projects that are slated to receive federal earmarks, expressed concern with funding lower-rated projects, expressed the preference to not spend money on partially funded projects from the last Regional Solicitation, and preferred not to fund any projects with funds from both HSIP and the Regional Solicitation. A workshop summarizing the scoring process is scheduled at the request of a member. Solberg added that TAB had a lot of comments but provided no direction.

McCullough asked whether the committee should narrow options down for TAB. Solberg said that TAB wants a list of pros and cons for each option.

Robgent stated that midpoints were shifted towards transit in the last cycle and given the amount of money available for transit, perhaps the midpoints could be shifted back. He said that there is no roadway-heavy scenario, reminding members that roadway projects include bicycle and pedestrian elements. He added that the Midpoint Scenario with Carbon Reduction Option 2 funds the Midpoint and the Bicycle/Pedestrian-heavy scenarios and that urban trails are scoring significantly better than non-urban trails.

Leitner said that the two lowest-ranked Transit Modernization projects are in the same city so it may be worth discussing with people from that area whether they are favorable to the proposed scenario that does not break the BRT maximum funding rule. She then asked how “carbon reduction” is defined, to which Peterson replied that the definition is federal and eligibility is similar to CMAQ eligibility, minus roadway projects like traffic management technologies. Finally, Leitner said that just because a project is ranked at the bottom of the scoring category does not mean it is a bad project, as evidenced by a lower-ranked project in Safe Routes to School that scored 63% of the top-ranked project, as opposed to a lot lower of a proportion in other categories.

Fyten asked how lifting the BRT rule would impact the transit categories. Peterson replied that in the Midpoint Scenario the Apple Valley BRT project would have likely been funded at the expense of the Southwest Transit project while in the Bicycle/Pedestrian-Heavy Scenario the MVTA project likely would not have been funded. Fyten said that care should be taken in comparing scores from category-to-category because there are several variables between categories. Koutsoukos said that TAB members expressed concern with lifting the BRT rule because one applicant said it chose not to apply in a transit category because of the rule.



Eyoh asked for clarification on whether the first two years of the Carbon Reduction program is included, while the subsequent three years will be decided later. Peterson replied that this is the case, and the first two years are included due to time constraints. Eyoh said he can provide a list of eligible projects.

Several members suggested retaining the BRT rule; Solberg suggested that the rule could be amended to accommodate scenarios with more funding. Solberg asked what will become of the funding if this decision results in \$2M to \$3M left over. Leitner suggested that it could break the tie shown in the Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities category. Peterson said that the project could be funded by piecing together transit money and extra Unique Projects money.

Isaacson asked how much overprogramming is shown. Peterson replied that it is just under 11% and that MnDOT is not likely to support a lot more. Isaacson said that more projects may drop than expected, as delivering projects is becoming more difficult. Solberg added that the workforce is not stable in the transportation industry.

Robjent suggested that federal funding exchanges should be discussed again.

Several members suggested a preference for moving any non-BRT money to bicycle and pedestrian projects for climate reasons. Robjent added traffic management technologies fits with that objective.

Peterson asked for pros and cons of the scenarios to provide to TAB. Robjent said that a pro for the Midpoint Scenario with Carbon Reduction option #2 is that it funds the full original Bicycle/Pedestrian-Heavy and Midpoint scenarios. Solberg said that the Bicycle/Pedestrian-Heavy Scenario is good for safety because it serves the most vulnerable users. Ellos expressed agreement and added that that in the Multiuse Trails category, some of the projects just below the funding line are resubmittals or equity bonus projects.

McCullough said it makes sense to fund the Scott County bicycle project, which is tied with a Three Rivers Park District project because the former is a resubmittal and Scott County does not have any other projects funded, while Three Rivers Park District has three projects shown as funded.

Hager said expressed support for the Bicycle/Pedestrian-Heavy Scenario and added that Safe Routes to School projects are low-cost and high benefit. Isaacson expressed agreement.

Solberg said that the Bicycle/Pedestrian-Heavy Scenario provision of an extra roadway reconstruction/modernization project is a pro.

Solberg asked that applicants provide pros and cons to Council staff within a week.

Other Business

Eyoh said the MPCA launched the Minnesota Action Framework on September 16. The framework has goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. He said that a grant opportunity for small communities to improve stormwater resilience and reduce flood risk is available. He said that MPCA has a job open for a climate and energy coordinator in its climate unit.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned.

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