

# Action Transmittal

Transportation Advisory Board



**Committee Meeting Date:** October 4, 2023

**Date:** September 27, 2023

## Action Transmittal: 2022-48

Program Year Extension Request: City of Blaine Trunk Highway 65 & 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue Interchange

**To:** Technical Advisory Committee  
**From:** TAC Funding and Programming Committee  
**Prepared By:** Steve Peterson, Senior Manager, MTS (Steven.Peterson@metc.state.mn.us)

### Requested Action

The City of Blaine is requesting a program year (PY) shift for its Trunk Highway 65 and 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue interchange project (SP 106-010-020) to move Regional Solicitation grant funding from 2024 to 2026.

### Recommended Motion

That the Technical Advisory Committee recommend approval of Blaine's request to move the Regional Solicitation funding for its Trunk Highway (TH) 65 at 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue grade separation (SP 106-010-020) from 2024 to 2026.

### Background and Purpose

The City of Blaine is requesting an exception to the program year extension. The City would like to move its TH 65 interchange project out by two years due to increased project scope and complexity. The project expanded from a single intersection at TH 65 and 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue to a corridor reconstruction project that now includes improvements of TH 65 between 97<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 119<sup>th</sup> Avenue (i.e., four interchanges). The project partners would like to move the Regional Solicitation project from 2024 to 2026 to align with construction of the larger MnDOT-led Highway 65 project to reduce construction-related impacts on nearby residents, businesses, and users of the corridor.

The City of Blaine was awarded funding for the interchange at TH 65 and 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue as part of the 2020 Regional Solicitation. Since then, additional funding has been allocated to the project from various sources including Corridors of Commerce, state legislative funding, Transportation and Economic Development (TED) funding, a second Regional Solicitation grant further north for 105<sup>th</sup> and 109<sup>th</sup> Avenues, a federal Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant, and other funding sources.

The TH 65 corridor project completed the state's first Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study and is currently in the preliminary design phase. As of the submission of this request, a layout plan has been submitted to MnDOT for final approval. This will allow the project to complete the final environmental documentation and move to final design. The total project now includes four interchanges. Constructing them all at once will have significant contracting advantages and reduce the construction duration by several years.

## Relationship to Regional Policy

The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) manages the annual program of projects programmed by the Regional Solicitation. The request does not follow TAB's Program Year Policy which states that a project can request one program year extension one time. In an attempt to reduce impacts to the traveling public, adjacent communities and businesses, the applicant is requesting an exception to the policy to align all coordinated projects into one construction project.

## Staff Analysis

While the program year policy only allows for a one-year, one-time program year extension, this is a circumstance where the region would be better served by bringing multiple projects together into one project to reduce construction duration and impacts. From a programming perspective, the shift of funds can be managed given recent program year shifts out of 2026, thereby freeing up funding in that year. In addition, there are enough projects that can move up into 2024 to utilize the \$10M hole being created in that year.

Table 1 provides a starting point of pros and cons for the committees to consider.

**Table 1: Pros/Cons of Granting Exception to Program Year Policy**

Pros	Cons
Combining adjacent projects together is better for the public due to minimization of construction impacts on local residents, businesses, and users of the corridor.	The approach is not consistent with how TAB deals with other program year extension requests, although several exceptions have been made in recent years (e.g., Highway 252 and Blue Line Extension-related projects). A work group on the topic has been established.
Combining the projects reduces the duration of the construction by several years, allowing the benefits of the project to be realized sooner for the region.	
Combining the projects is better from a contracting efficiency perspective.	
Limited financial impact to the overall Regional Solicitation program.	

## Committee Comments and Action

This issue was brought to the TAB Executive Committee on August 16, 2023, given the complexity of the issue relative to current TAB Policy. TAB Executive agreed to send the request through as an action item to the committees. The Policy was written with stand-alone projects in mind, whereas how to treat a project that connects to a larger project is not adequately addressed. This circumstance is happening more often and is likely to continue. A technical workgroup has been established to review the policy and will begin meetings in the next few weeks.

At its September 21, 2023, meeting, the TAC Funding & Programming Committee recommended approval of the City of Blaine's request to move the Regional Solicitation funding for its Trunk Highway (TH) 65 at 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue grade separation from 2024 to 2026.



## Routing

To	Action Requested	Date Scheduled/ Completed
TAC Funding & Programming Committee	Review & Recommend	September 21, 2023
Technical Advisory Committee	Review & Recommend	<i>October 4, 2023</i>
Transportation Advisory Board	Review & Adopt	<i>October 18, 2023</i>





## City of Blaine

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Blaine MN 55449-8100  
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August 2, 2023

James Hovland  
Chair, TAB Executive Committee  
Metropolitan Council  
390 Robert Street North  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1805

Re: Program Year Change Request for:  
SP 106-010-020 – Blaine: TH65 at 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE Grade Separation

Mr. Hovland,

The City of Blaine respectfully request support from the TAB Executive Committee for a program year change to the year 2026 for the above referenced project located on TH 65, that was previously awarded federal funds through a previous cycle of the Regional Solicitation.

Following is a brief history of the project:

- City of Blaine was awarded funding for this project in program year 2024 as part of the 2020 Regional Solicitation for TH 65 and 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue Grade Separation.
- City of Blaine/Anoka County was recently granted state legislative funding for TH 65 from 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 117<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- City of Blaine was recently granted RAISE funding for TH 65 from 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 117<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- City of Blaine/Anoka County was recently granted COC funding for TH 65 from 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 117<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

The City of Blaine understands that Metropolitan Council's policy is to only grant a one program year extension. However, due to the increased complexity of this project expanding from a single intersection at TH 65 and 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue to a corridor project that now includes improvements of TH 65 from 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 117<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The project team is requesting an exception to the program year policy. Some of the reasons this project has pushed back from 2024 to 2026 is due to the project being expanded from a single intersection improvement to a corridor reconstruction project, review and coordination with partner agencies and additional engagement, including all those the use the corridor and those living and working adjacent to the corridor.

The TH65 project from 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 117<sup>th</sup> Avenue has completed a Planning and Linkages Study (PEL) and is currently in the preliminary design phase. As of the writing of this letter a layout plan has been submitted to the Minnesota Department of Transportation for final approval. This will allow the project to complete the final environmental document and move to final design.

We recognize this is outside the typical process for a program year extension. However, while this is a regionally significant corridor project has progressed, all partners have continued to support the project. Based on this, the City of Blaine request support to change the above referenced project to program year 2026. Please contact me if you need additional information.

Sincerely,



Daniel Schluender, P.E.  
Blaine Director of Engineering