



Potential Changes to 2024 Regional Solicitation

Technical Advisory Committee



March 2023

2024 Regional Solicitation

Milestones

- Draft Regional Solicitation application action item to F&P: April 2023
- Public comment period: May/June 2023
- Open application period: late September/October-December 2023
- Scoring and appeals: January-March 2024
- Funding scenarios: April-July 2024
- TAB project selection: July 2024

Advanced timeline assumes minimal changes to the application to enable greater focus on Regional Solicitation Evaluation, which will start this summer.

#1: Criteria / Measure Weighing

Increase points for safety and/or emissions measures?

The Regional Solicitation survey included comments about increasing the score weighting of safety and emissions categories.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION FOR SAFETY: Increase the safety scoring by 100 points for Roadway categories (excluding Bridges, which do not have a safety measure).

1. 50 points each to crash reduction and “Safety Issues in Project Area” in Traffic Management Technologies
2. 70 points for crash reduction and 30 pedestrian safety and in Spot Mobility/Safety, Strategic Capacity, and Reconstruction/Modernization

This would result in four categories having 1,200-point totals and the rest having 1,100 points.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION FOR EMISSIONS: No change for emissions as we wait for the Regional Transportation and Climate Change Multimodal Measures process to conclude and incorporate into 2026 cycle.

F&P COMMENTS: Members were comfortable with the approach. The scoring additions have changed following a member expressing preference towards the crash reduction measure (#1 had been 100 pts to “Safety Issues...” and #2 had been 50 points to each measure).

#2: Funding Ranges

Funding Outside of the Ranges

In 2022, TAB funded the Bicycle/Pedestrian mode above its funding range. This concerned some members, though it is not against policy.

“...modal funding ranges have been established by TAB, based on historic levels, to give applicants an understanding of the general funding levels available by mode. TAB reserves the right to adjust these modal funding levels depending on the amount and quality of projects submitted.”

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: No change. The above rule provides flexibility in case unforeseen circumstances occur. The general topic of modal funding ranges and funding distribution will be discussed as part of the Regional Solicitation Evaluation.

F&P COMMENTS: Members expressed comfort with not changing the rule but suggested reminders that going outside of the ranges is possible and incorporating geographic balance when considering modal ranges.



#3: Agency Priorities



Consideration of Agency Priorities

County feedback included interest in including consideration of high-priority projects from individual sponsors.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Consider this during the Regional Solicitation Evaluation. This conversation and any potential implementation are likely to take several months.

F&P COMMENTS: Understanding agency priority could be a way to break a tied score, though given the number of applicants (counties, cities, transit providers, etc.) within the same geographies, it may be difficult to truly rank priority projects. For the long-run the region should consider whether it wants to defer to regional priorities or local priorities (this comment was made favoring the former).

#4: Tied Scores



Breaking Ties?

Currently, there is no rule one way or the other on tied scores. While TAB has historically been unwilling to break ties, tie-breaking could provide an opportunity to achieve other objectives.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Out of 1,100 points, scores are not precise enough to say that the two projects provide the same benefit to the region. Staff recommends the flexibility to fund one of two tied projects if that helps with another objective such as modal distribution or geographic distribution.

F&P COMMENTS: Consider finding a way for ties to be avoided (this could be difficult given the number of scoring measures). Could use something like highest safety score as a tiebreaker. Agency priorities could also be considered at this point.

#5: Scoring Appeals

Logistics/Process

The Regional Solicitation language provides minimal direction to scoring appeals. This has created confusion for Funding & Programming Committee members in deciding upon appeals.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: To ensure fairness, a more defined process should be created during the Regional Solicitation Evaluation. For the 2024 cycle, staff recommends the following rules:

- Provide a response letter to applicants with the committee's determination and allow for one meeting with the scoring chair, Council staff, and the applicant.
- Following the appeal deadline, no new information/rationales should be provided by the applicant.

F&P COMMENTS: Staff could share how impactful a potential change impacts ranking (counterpoints: each measure should be scored on its own merit; not on the overall impact. Also, because any change can change the cost effectiveness score, total scores can be hard to determine quickly during a meeting.)



#6: Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Rule



Apply for / Receive From Two Sources?

Historically applicants have been allowed to apply to the Regional Solicitation and HSIP Solicitation but can only accept money from one of the two programs.

“Projects may apply for both the Regional Solicitation and the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), but projects can only be awarded funds from one of the two programs.”

In 2022, staff proposed funding projects with funds from each solicitation. This was not received well by TAB members.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Continue to allow application to both solicitations and keep the existing rule as written.

F&P COMMENTS: None.

#7: Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Limit



Is the Bus Rapid Transit Limit Needed?

The below rule was established along with the Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ABRT) funding program.

Within the Transit modal category, there is an Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Project category. There is also a New Market guarantee to ensure that at least one Transit Expansion or Modernization project is funded that serves areas outside of Transit Market Area 1 and 2 from the Transportation Policy Plan for at least one end of the project. The combined maximum funding amount for bus rapid transit projects funded in the Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Project, Transit Expansion, and Transit Modernization categories will be \$32,000,000.”

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Because funding amounts can lead to rigidity, staff suggests basing this on the number of projects, i.e., requiring that at least two projects not directly tied to BRT projects are funded.

F&P COMMENTS: Could consider including LRT along with BRT, though additional restrictions like this could lead to funding lower down the scoring lists, which has been identified as a concern.

#8: Trail and Sidewalk Maintenance

Removing Snow and Ice

Currently applicants are required to state that they will maintain facilities by removing snow. However, this does not apply to other categories, as should be done under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Winter maintenance should be required for all facilities, including trails/sidewalks funded under the roadways categories.

F&P COMMENTS: Members are comfortable with this.



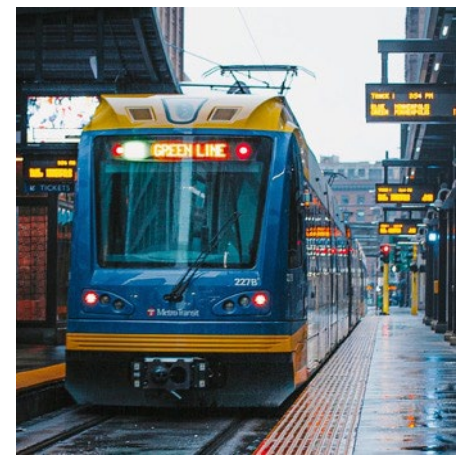
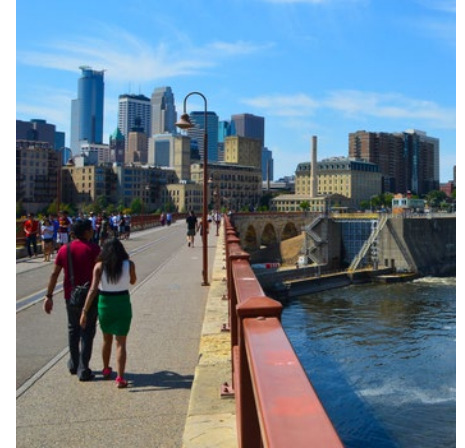
#9 Bridges

Target Funding

Current Bridge target is \$10M. MnDOT has indicated that we should not assume that the new On-System Bridge program will continue since the funding came from a general fund transfer.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: In case the On-System Bridge program continues, expand eligibility downward for other federally-aid eligible bridges (i.e., On-System Brides) for the 2024 cycle. This expanded eligibility would include Major and Minor Collectors and B-Minors for urban areas and the same list minus Minor Collectors for rural areas.

F&P COMMENTS: Members were comfortable with the approach.



#10 Minimum Point Value



Establishing a Cutoff Point?

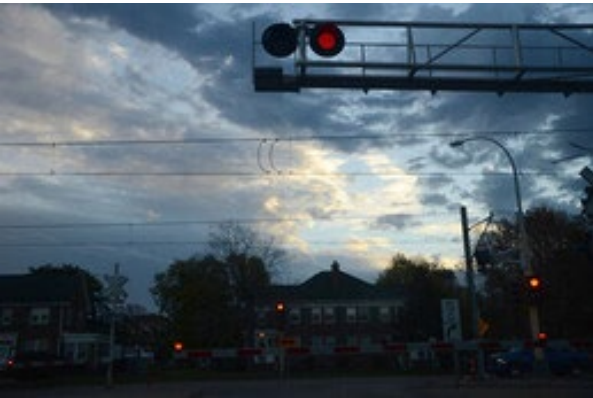
Some participants note the variation between the lower-ranking project scores that receive funding leading to the question of whether some funding categories essentially have lower standards for funding.

Staff cautions that for various reasons, it is nearly impossible to use scores to compare projects across categories.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: No change for 2024. A determination of a sound way to determine minimum threshold(s) that allow for consistency across categories, if even possible, would likely need the time allotted in the Regional Solicitation Evaluation.

F&P COMMENTS: A designated line could be arbitrary and could discount viable projects and a lot of thought needs to go into this. Outliers, along with the number of applications submitted, can lead to inconsistent scoring ranges by category.

#11 Regional Bicycle Transportation Network Administrative Adjustments



RBTN

Council staff will have an open period (minimum of 3 weeks) to receive requests for administrative adjustments; eligible adjustments will be limited to specific categories and considered based on RBTN guiding principles as was done for Regional Solicitations prior to 2022. Administrative adjustments include:

- Alignment designations within existing RBTN corridors
- Minor extensions up to one-half mile long that provide missing connections to RBTN alignments, regional trails, or regional destinations
- Minor alignment or corridor centerline shifts to within one-quarter mile of the initial alignment/centerline in core cities or to within one-half mile of initial alignment/centerline outside core cities and that continue to serve regional destinations served by the initial alignment

F&P COMMENTS: None.

#12 Federal Minimum and Maximum Awards

Modal Application Categories:	Min Fed Award	Max Fed Award
Roadways Including Multimodal Elements		
• Traffic Management Technologies	\$250,000	\$3,500,000
• Spot Mobility and Safety	\$1,000,000	\$3,500,000
• Strategic Capacity	\$1,000,000	\$10,000,000
• Roadway Reconstruction/ Modernization	\$1,000,000	\$7,000,000
• Bridge Rehabilitation/Replacement	\$1,000,000	\$7,000,000
Transit and TDM Projects		
• Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Project	N/A	\$25,000,000
• Transit Expansion	\$500,000	\$7,000,000
• Transit Modernization	\$500,000	\$7,000,000
• Travel Demand Management (TDM)	\$100,000	\$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	\$250,000	\$1,000,000
Unique Projects	\$500,000	\$4,000,000



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