

Transportation Advisory Board

of the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities

ACTION TRANSMITTAL No. 2020-26

DATE: June 11, 2020

TO: TAC Funding and Programming Committee

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SUBJECT: 2020 Regional Solicitation Qualifying Review

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Staff recommendations and proposed motions are shown below.
All motions are final actions.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF ACTION: Metropolitan Council staff reviewed the qualifying criteria and policy consistency for all project applications submitted in the 2020 Regional Solicitation. Under the TAB policies, the qualifying review decision ends with the TAC Funding & Programming Committee and does not continue to TAC or TAB.

STAFF ANALYSIS: The following applications have potential qualifying review issues. All projects not discussed below are qualified.

A. QUALIFIED, PENDING SUBMITTAL OF LETTERS OR DOCUMENTATION BY SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

On April 16, 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, TAB approved allowing applicants to submit support letters after the May 15, 2020, application deadline, with a new submission deadline of September 1, 2020. In addition, other applicants were not able to provide required documentation by the submission date. The proposed action allows the applications described below to be approved pending receipt of a letter or required documentation by September 1, 2020.

1. Snow and Ice Removal Letters

Qualifying Issue: Within the Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Trails funding category, a qualifying criterion states that “all applications must include a letter from the operator of the facility confirming that they will remove snow and ice for year-round bicycle and pedestrian use.” The following applications did not include any related letter or statement regarding snow and ice removal:

- (14404) Washington County CSAH 32 Trail.
- (14161) Cottage Grove 70th St. Trail.
- (14162) Cottage Grove CSAH 19 Trail.
- (14208) Rogers Interstate 94 Pedestrian Bridge.

2. Provision of Match Letters of Support

Qualifying Issue: If the applicant expects any other agency or competitive grant program to provide part of the local match, the applicant must include a letter or resolution from

the other agency agreeing to financially participate or provide documentation of the competitive award.

- (14057) Fridley 53rd Avenue Trail Connection. The application indicates that Columbia Heights is contributing to the local match. However, no such letter or documentation from the city was included.
- (14208) Rogers Interstate 94 Pedestrian Bridge. Match shown as “Local Trail Trunk Fund” However, it is unclear what agency is committing to the project match funding.

3. Completion of ADA Self-Evaluation

Qualifying Issue: In order for a selected project to be included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and approved by USDOT, the public agency sponsor must either have a current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) self-evaluation or transition plan that covers the public right of way/transportation, as required under Title II of the ADA.

- (14290) Arden Hills Mounds View High School Trail project. No self-evaluation provided.
- (14297) Arden Hills Old Snelling Trail Extension project. No self-evaluation provided.

4. Agreement with Railroad Provider

Qualifying issue: All multiuse trail projects that are located within right-of-way occupied by an active railroad must attach an agreement with the railroad that this right-of-way will be used for trail purposes.

- (14092) Ramsey County Bruce Vento Regional Trail Extension. Trail is parallel to rail line and a required agreement was not provided.
- (14208) Rogers Interstate 94 Pedestrian Bridge. The trail crosses a railroad track and a required agreement was not provided.

5. MnDOT Letter of Support

Qualifying issue: The applicant must include a letter of support from the agency that owns/operates the facility (if different than the applicant) indicating that it is aware of and understands the project being submitted, and that it commits to operate and maintain the facility for its design life.

- (14208) Rogers Interstate 94 Pedestrian Bridge. A 2016 letter signed by then-Commissioner Zelle was included. A letter of support from the current administration should be provided.

Staff Recommendation for categories 1-5: Approve all the above described applications conditional on supply of the required letters or documentation by September 1, 2020. In the meantime, the applications would be scored and only deemed to be disqualified if the applicants do not provide the letters or documentation on time.

Proposed Motion: That project applications numbered 14404, 14092, 14161, 14162, 14208, 14057, 14290, and 14297 be deemed qualified contingent upon submittal of the required letters or documentation by September 1, 2020.

B. POTENTIAL DISQUALIFICATIONS

The contact people for the applications below were sent notices informing them that the project application had a potential qualifying issue(s), along with a description of the issue(s) and asked that they provide a response. Staff has reviewed the responses submitted, and based upon this review a staff recommendation and proposed qualifying motion for each application is provided below.

1. Minnesota Valley Transit Authority: Eagan Transit Station Modernization (14295, Transit Modernization). See page 7 for project summary.

Qualifying Issue: The application's \$440,000 requested federal funding amount is lower than the \$500,000 minimum request needed to qualify in the Transit Modernization funding category.

Options:

- Disqualify the project
- Allow the project to compete with a federal request of \$440,000
- Allow the project to compete at the application category minimum of \$500,000 federal request.

Staff Recommendation: Allow the project to compete with the submitted federal request amount. A similar action took place in 2016, for a roughly \$60,000 gap, which is the size of this gap. Staff further recommends not increasing the federal requested amount to the \$500,000 minimum, as that would artificially inflate the federal amount, providing additional funds for no additional benefit.

Proposed Motion: That the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority project 14295 be qualified at the federal request amount submitted.

2. SouthWest Transit: Signal Prioritization at East Creek Park and Ride (14191, Transit Modernization). See page 7 for project summary.

Qualifying Issue: The application's \$443,520 requested federal funding amount is lower than the \$500,000 minimum request needed to qualify in the Transit Modernization funding category.

Options:

- Disqualify the project
- Allow the project to compete with a federal request of \$443,520
- Allow the project to compete at the application category minimum of \$500,000 federal request.

Staff Recommendation: Allow the project to compete with the submitted federal request amount of \$443,520. A similar action took place in 2016, for a roughly \$60,000 gap, slightly more than the size of this gap. Staff further recommends not increasing the federal requested amount to the \$500,000 minimum, as that would artificially inflate the federal amount, providing additional funds for no additional benefit.

Proposed Motion: That the Southwest Transit project 14191 be qualified at the federal request amount submitted.

3. Move Minneapolis: Comprehensive Mode Share Measurement (14440, Travel Demand Management). See page 8 for project summary and response letter in separate handout.

Qualifying Issue: The Travel Demand Management (TDM) funding category funds projects that directly impact reduced reliance on single-occupancy vehicles. Based on Council staff's understanding, the project is a survey tool that appears to have no direct impact on mode choice or travel reduction of individuals and is not eligible per federal or Metropolitan Council guidelines.

Applicable Regional Solicitation Qualifying Criterion (applies to all funding categories): The project must exclude costs for *studies*, preliminary engineering, design, or construction engineering. Right-of-way costs are only eligible as part of transit stations/stops, transit terminals, park-and-ride facilities, or pool-and-ride lots. Noise barriers, drainage projects, fences, landscaping, etc., are not eligible for funding as a standalone project, but can be included as part of the larger submitted project, which is otherwise eligible.

Application TDM Definition: Travel demand management (TDM) provides residents/commuters of the Twin Cities Metro Area with greater choices and options regarding how to travel in and throughout the region. *Projects should reduce the congestion and emissions during the peak period.* Similar to past Regional Solicitations, base-level TDM funding for the Transportation Management Organizations (TMOs) and Metro Transit will be not part of the competitive process.

Examples of TDM Projects:

- Bikesharing
- Carsharing
- Telework strategies
- Carpooling
- Parking management
- Managed lane components

Options:

- Disqualify the application. (No option to qualify the project as studies are ineligible for federal CMAQ funding.)

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends that this project does not follow federal guidelines for TDM and CMAQ funding as it is a survey/study that is not eligible under federal CMAQ guidance or TAB's adopted application qualifying criteria.

Proposed Motion: That the Move Minneapolis project 14440 be disqualified.

4. Move Minnesota: Changing the School Commute—Shifting Youth to Transit (14041, Travel Demand Management). See page 8 for project summary

Qualifying Issue: Based on Council staff's initial understanding of the application and input provided by FHWA staff, it is unclear if all elements of this project are eligible for federal CMAQ funding. Specifically, there are questions as to whether portions of the project should be considered a "study" and therefore the costs are not eligible and also whether all elements are open to the general public, as it appeared the fare incentive is limited only to students.

Applicable Regional Solicitation Qualifying Criterion (applies to all funding categories): Similar criterion to the application described in #3 above, and in addition “The project must be accessible and open to the general public.”

Options:

- Approve the application as qualifying, with the applicant understanding that only eligible expenses would be reimbursed. Request that Move Minnesota provide a more detailed project budget, so that FHWA can identify the items that are ineligible.
- Disqualify the application.

Staff Recommendation: Based upon the applicant’s response it appears that portions of the project may be ineligible for CMAQ funding. Council staff recommends continuing to work with FHWA to identify eligible and ineligible costs. The applicant must commit that upon determination by FHWA, that costs not eligible for federal funds would be covered by local funds.

Proposed Motion: That the Move Minnesota project 14441 be qualified as a TDM project subject to review of eligible costs by FHWA, and a commitment by the applicant to fund any costs deemed federally ineligible using local funds (above the local match).

5. Metro Transit: Gold Line Downtown Modernization (14392, Transit Modernization). See page 9 for project summary and response letter in separate handout.

Qualifying Issue: The proposed project includes the building of transit stations and it is unclear if these stations should be considered new or upgraded existing stations. New stations should compete in the Transit Expansion application category while upgraded stations compete in the Transit Modernization application category. In past Regional Solicitation cycles, projects that upgraded existing transit stops were funded in the Transit Modernization application category. In this case, the application refers to Gold Line stations that appear to be new and also refers to some upgrades to existing transit stops served by existing local routes.

While the project name/title refers to the Gold Line, the ridership calculations and benefits discussed within the application rely solely on existing local routes and ridership, new Gold Line ridership is not considered.

Applicable Application Instructions: “If a project includes both expansion and modernization elements, it is the applicant’s discretion to choose which application category the project would best fit.”

Application Transit Modernization Description: “A transit project that makes transit more attractive to existing riders by offering faster travel times between destinations or improving the customer experience. Modernization projects may also benefit new or future riders, but the projects will be scored primarily on the benefit to existing riders.”

Options:

- Qualify the application as a Transit Modernization project.
- Disqualify the project as it should have been a Transit Expansion project.
- Allow the project to move to the Transit Expansion funding category and include the opportunity to provide updated data on measures 2 (new annual riders) and 4 (total emissions) and eliminate consideration of measure 5 (project improvements for transit users).

Staff Recommendation: Based upon the applicant's response, the project appears to be a hybrid project with both new and improved stations. The project calculates its ridership and benefits using existing riders as required under the Transit Modernization measures. Because the application instructions specifically allow the applicant to choose an application category for a project with both expansion and modernization elements, the staff recommendation is that the project remain within the Transit Modernization category.

Proposed Motion: That the Metro Transit project 14392 be qualified as a Transit Modernization project.

ROUTING		
TO	ACTION REQUESTED	SCHEDULED DATE
TAC Funding & Programming Committee	Adopt	6/17/2020

Submitted Project Summaries of Potential Application Disqualifications

1. Minnesota Valley Transit Association: Eagan Transit Station Modernization (14295, Transit Modernization)

Brief Project Summary:

With a growing ridership at Eagan Transit Station (ETS), the need for an elevator has become apparent. ETS Modernization grant application is for the installation of a passenger elevator. The station is bordered by the secant busiest intersection in Dakota County, Yankee Doodle Road and Pilot Knob Road. Advance to Interstate Highway 35E; it provides transit access to a large retail area, hotels, and multi-family housing. The Station also serves commuters to the downtown areas of both Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Development in the area grew rapidly when MVTA built a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) on the lite located at 3470 Pilot Knob Road in Eagan, MN. The area is now the City of Eagan's central shopping district. That project included a six-store mall adjacent to the transit station. The original 330-vehicle surface park and ride started serving customers in 1999. The park and ride demand at the site increased on in 2002 and it was expanded to accommodate 750 vehicles. The expansion included a two-level parking ramp structure, customer waiting area, and restrooms. Annual ridership at this location is just under half a million. The expansion project did not include a passenger elevator. Currently, ass customers parking on the upper levels are required to use stairways only to exit the parking ramp.

The Metropolitan Council's Thrive MSP 2040 Transportation Policy Plan sates we should provide people of all ages and abilities with a transportation system that connects them with jobs, schools, and opportunities. It has become a necessity that an elevator is installed to aid customers in existing all levels at ETS transit station parking ramp. This project is consistent with Thrive MSP 2040.

2. SouthWest Transit: Signal Prioritization at East Creek Park and Ride (14191, Transit Modernization)

Brief Project Summary:

The project consists of allowing better access into and especially out of the East Creek parking ramp located in the southwest quadrant of Highways 212 and 41. This project is signal prioritization for those accessing and leaving the ramp. Pre-COVID-19 days, busloads of 35 to 55 passengers would unload and all try to leave, in single occupant vehicles, the ramp at one time causing a significant backup into the ramp itself.

The address is 2120 Chestnut Street North, Chaska, MN 44318. The road where the ramp traffic exits onto is Highway 41/Chestnut Street North. The street opposite the exit at East Creek is Canyon Road. Highway 41 is considered a Principal Arterial.

3. **Move Minneapolis: Comprehensive Mode Share Measurement (14440, Travel Demand Management)**

Brief Project Summary:

Move Minneapolis in partnership with a technical advisory panel will develop a novel commute mode share measurement tool to include a full range of multimodal categories (shared modes, walking, biking, ebiking, scooting, on-demand microtransit, Metro Mobility, etc.). remote work impacts, equity considerations, and other key commuter attributes. The initial survey will reflect a fully representative sample of commuters in downtown Minneapolis, but the tool will be designed to be expanded to study additional cities and regions.

4. **Move Minnesota: Changing The School Commute—Shifting Youth to Transit (14041, Travel Demand Management)**

Brief Project Summary:

Changing the School Commute: Shifting You to Transit Use is an innovative TDM project to change behavior for students commuting to high schools Minneapolis and Saint Paul new Metro Transit's High Frequency Network. The project will work to shift school car trips to transit trips. The High Frequency Network routes run on high congestion arterial streets--so that a shift from car to transit along these routes provides congestion relief where it is needed most.

Move Minnesota will implement the following strategies, leveraging our TDM expertise in combination with the lived experience of students and school staff:

- Research effective delivery methods for specific school settings. Because of privacy practices, there is little data around the perceived and actual barriers families encounter when making transportation choices. While Move Minnesota can extrapolate generally based on its years of TDM experience, research will be necessary to determine if a curricular, extracurricular, or organizing approach is effective for specific sites. Move Minnesota has identified public high schools as the type with the most opportunity, where students are older and more confident in their ability to navigate transit. Changes in a public school system also have the potential to impact multiple sites. However, staff will also research other schools that are good candidates.
- Build relationships with schools, educators, and students. Successful behavior change work in this area will require information gathering and research, which relies on proactively building and maintaining relationships with key influencers such as respected educators, student groups, advisory boards, and students with social capital. These are all points of influence within a school community, and support logistical changes as well as cultural ones.
- Develop educational toolkits for students, educators, and/or school officials. These could include maps, pricing information, relevant policies, or information about individual and societal benefits of sustainable transportation choices. In many cases, these materials will need to be multilingual to ensure ESL students are able to access them.
- Develop site-specific recommendations for changes that will amplify transit use. This could include changes to drop-off and pick-up zones or

procedures, vehicle parking mitigation, transit passes for students or families, etc. Specific recommendations will be informed by research and relationships with specific sites.

This project is exciting because it (1) reduces congestion and VMT near and during peak travel times, while it (2) works with youth to change behavior patterns before the age where most people purchase a car, thus making a significant commitment to driving.

5. Metro Transit: Gold Line Downtown Modernization (14392, Transit Modernization)

Brief Project Summary:

The Gold Line Ramsey Washington Saint Paul Downtown Modernization Project will improve the transit experience within downtown Saint Paul by providing passengers with features to make transit a more comfortable, accessible, and reliable travel option. This project will construct nine bus rapid transit (BRT) stations within the downtown core to accommodate the planned METRO Gold Line BRT line, which is anticipated to open 2024. Stations will also support the planned METRO B Line BRT and Rush Line BRT and provide easy connections to existing local, limited stop, and express bus service within downtown. The project corridor currently includes 23 bus routes that make over 1,000 daily trips on an average weekday, with over 14,000 daily boardings and alightings. The full-amenity stations proposed within this application would improve waiting conditions for all transit riders within the corridor and accommodate the increased ridership forecast as part of these planned transitways.

Transit stations to be constructed as part of this project will provide passengers with improved amenities such as enhanced shelters with light, heat, and security features; raised platforms for accessible boarding; real-time arrival information; offboard fare collection technology; bicycle parking; waste receptacles; and seating. Buses serving several of these stations would travel in existing bus-only lanes on 5th and 6th streets, which will improve travel times throughout the corridor. Offboard fare collection will significantly reduce well times at each station and further reduce travel time and annual operating costs.

The METRO Gold Line would connect the cities of Saint Paul, Maplewood, Landfall, Oakdale, and Woodbury and provide high-frequency, bidirectional service at 21 new stations along the line. Construction of this project would allow riders to travel between downtown Saint Paul and east metro communities using reliable and high-quality transit facilities that improve the rider experience and maximize operational efficiency.

This project includes \$10.5 million for construction of these improvements. Nine station locations have been identified and are discussed further in the application. Stations would be constructed on 5th and 6th Streets, Smith Avenue, and Sibley and Wacouta Streets in downtown. The project does not request funding for bus purchases.