

# Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAC FUNDING & PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

Thursday, June 18, 2020

**Committee Members Present:** Paul Oehme (Chair, Lakeville), Jerry Auge (Anoka County), Angie Stenson (Carver County), John Sass (Dakota County), Jason Pieper (Hennepin County), John Mazzitello (Ramsey County), Craig Jenson (Scott County), Emily Jorgensen (Washington County), Elaine Koutsoukos (TAB), Cole Hiniker (Metropolitan Council), Anna Flintoft (Metro Transit), Molly McCartney (MnDOT Metro District), Colleen Brown (MnDOT Metro District State Aid), Innocent Eyoh (MPCA), Mackenzie Turner Bargaen (MnDOT Bike & Ped), Nancy Spooner-Mueller (DNR), Aaron Bartling (MVTA), Karl Keel (Bloomington), Jim Kosluchar (Fridley), Ken Ashfeld (Maple Grove), Michael Thompson (Plymouth), Nathan Koster (Minneapolis), Anne Weber (St. Paul)

**Committee Members Absent:** Robert Ellis (Eden Prairie)

## I. CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Chair Oehme called the regular meeting of the Funding & Programming Committee to order at 1:32 p.m. on Thursday, June 18, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held via teleconference.

## II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: It was moved by Keel and seconded by Ashfeld to approve the agenda. The roll-call-vote served also to take attendance. **Motion carried unanimously** via roll-call vote.

## III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**MOTION 1:** It was moved by Kosluchar and seconded by Koutsoukos to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2020, regular meeting of the Funding & Programming Committee. Motion 1 carried unanimously via roll-call vote.

## IV. TAB REPORT

Koutsoukos reported on the June 17, 2020, TAB meeting. This included discussion on a potential second two-year extension of projects in Brooklyn Center, which would be an exception to the program year extension policy. McCartney said that MnDOT intends to complete a full environmental impact statement (EIS), which is time-consuming.

## V. BUSINESS

1. 2020-26: 2020 Regional Solicitation Qualifying Review

Barbeau said that due to the Covid pandemic, an extension on letters and resolutions was extended to September 1 by TAB. Staff created a list of projects that it is recommending for qualification pending receipt of letters and solicitation. Those are for removal of snow and ice, commitment of local match from partners, completion of an ADA self-evaluation, agreements with railroad providers, and a letter of support from MnDOT.

**MOTION 2:** It was moved by Keel and seconded by Spooner-Mueller 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. Motion 2 carried unanimously via roll call vote.

Barbeau introduced the first two projects being considering for disqualification, as they are similar. The first project, provided by Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) requested

\$440,000, which is below the \$500,000 minimum federal request. Similarly, SouthWest Transit (SWT) requested \$443,520. Staff recommended allowing these requests and further recommended not moving the federal request to \$500,000, which would provide more federal funding for no additional benefit.

Bartling said that both MVTA and SWT agree with the staff recommendation.

Oehme asked whether the smaller cost could impact the cost effectiveness measure. Barbeau said that it may, in that the project costs will be lower than others, though in theory the benefits are reduced.

Hiniker suggested stating that this is being done as an exception based on the increased federal minimum. Koutsoukos said that this has happened before. Keel expressed agreement with Hiniker.

**MOTION 3:** It was moved by Stenson and seconded by Thompson that the MVTA project 14295 be qualified at the federal request amount submitted and that the Southwest Transit project 14191 be qualified at the federal request amount submitted, based on the change in the minimum federal request changing. Motion 3 carried via roll-call vote, with Bartling abstaining due to his connection with one of the projects.

Barbeau said that Move Minneapolis's Comprehensive Mode Share Measurement (14440, Travel Demand Management) 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. Koutsoukos added that she shared that applications with Theresa Cain (Metro Transit) and Bobbi Retzlaff, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Retzlaff agreed that the staff's summary.

Mary Morse Marti, Move Minneapolis said that the project would work with telework on moving single-occupant drivers to other modes. McCartney asked whether this is a development of a tool or a survey. Morse Marti said that it's a survey that will lead to development of tools.

McCartney asked whether the work it could be funded through STBG Program. Koutsoukos said that the CMAQ funds have been set aside for earlier years so there may not be STBG Program funds available. She added that she would have to work with FHWA to determine eligibility.

Hiniker asked how trip reduction was accounted for in the application. Koutsoukos said that the application predicted a 523,000 reduction in vehicle miles travelled, based on a 10 percent reduction in driving alone.

Koster asked whether this could be a unique project. Steve Peterson, Metropolitan Council, said that it may fit, though the unique project criteria has yet to be drafted.

Koutsoukos said that the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) would not reimburse this project. Morse Marti said that it would be easy to add a direct TDM element to the project. Elaine suggested that the existing pieces would still not be eligible, to which Retzlaff expressed uncertainty.

Keel suggested an approval contingent on eligibility, though expressed the desire to not change scope to make it eligible.

Hiniker said that he supports the staff recommendation because the project is a better fit in the unique application category.

Thompson said that with FHWA's uncertainty, he supports this application and the Move Minnesota application being qualified conditional on federal approval.

Stenson asked why TDM only uses CMAQ funding. Koutsoukos replied that CMAQ funds are set aside for TDM and, since TDM is funded on an expedited timeline, funding with STPB Program funds might lead to unprogrammed CMAQ funds. She added that she is uncertain as to whether there is STPB Program funding available in the next two years.

Barbeau introduced the application from Move Minnesota, Changing the School Commute—Shifting Youth to Transit (14041, Travel Demand Management). Based on Council staff's initial understanding of the application and input provided by FHWA staff, it is unclear whether 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 whether all elements are open to the general public, as it appeared the fare incentive is limited only to students. Each of these concerns could lead to project elements being ineligible.

Sam Rockwell from Move Minnesota expressed disagreement with the notion that public-school students, parents, and staff are not part of the general public. He added that his agency has completed projects with colleges. Oehme, on behalf of someone on the "chat" asked whether previous projects completed at colleges were CMAQ funded. Koutsoukos said that colleges have been eligible for projects open to more than just students.

Elissa Schufman from Move Minnesota said that the application provides data based on students because that was the data that was available.

**MOTION 4:** Keel moved to that projects 14440 and 14441 be qualified as TDM projects 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). Seconded by McCartney.

Hiniker said he would vote against the motion because the Move Minneapolis project is not eligible per the Solicitation requirements.

Motion 4 was approved with Hiniker voting against and Koster abstaining due to having missed much of the discussion.

McCarthy asked how much CMAQ funding is slated for TDM. Koutsoukos replied that \$1.2 million is available. Barbeau said that the four applications ask for a total of \$1.3 million and given that some elements may be disqualified, all projects may be able to be funded.

Hiniker asked that the scorer pay careful attention to Move Minneapolis's estimates on single-occupancy-vehicle reduction, given that it's a study. Barbeau said that scorers have reduced projections based on reasonableness.

Barbeau said that Metro Transit's Gold Line Downtown Modernization (14392, Transit Modernization) includes the building of transit stations and it is unclear whether 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 local routes. The Solicitation instructions do say that the applicant has discretion between Transit Modernization and Transit Expansion when there

are elements of each. However, this project is more of an expansion and staff viewed it as a gray area.

Charles Carlson from Metro Transit said that he felt Modernization was the best fit due to the upgrading of some specific stations and because the new corridor benefits many existing.

Bartling said that this project seems like more of an expansion project and suggested that the language be clarified in the future.

**MOTION 5:** Thompson moved that the Metro Transit project 14392 be qualified as a Transit Modernization. Seconded by Jorgensen. Motion 5 was approved unanimously.

## **VI. INFORMATION**

### 1. Freeway System Interchange Study

Tony Fischer, Metropolitan Council, provided a summary on the Freeway System Interchange Study

Turner Barga asked whether environmental justice impacts were measured and whether there were considerations around the facilities as regional bicycle barriers. Fischer said that this is a high-level technical analysis and did not include an equity component, though there may be ways to explore that. Regarding bicycle barriers, these interchanges are large nodes, whereas bicycle barriers are usually addressed along corridors.

Ashfeld asked whether there is any identification of what costs are based upon. Fischer replied that instances where costs exceed benefits are not reported. Ashfeld asked what the \$10 million to \$30 million figure for the Fish Lake interchange entailed. Fischer said that he can share more information.

Koster echoed Turner Barga's comment that environmental justice needs to be considered. Fischer added that the study is high-level and that individual projects would have to go through a lot of process before coming to fruition.

Oehme asked whether there will be specific studies or projects with the interchanges identified. Fischer said that there's no funding identified, except for the low-cost projects, which are in the current revenue scenario of the draft TPP.

Via chat, Hiniker asked whether there was consideration for evaluation of vehicle miles traffic (VMT) increases. Fischer replied that any VMT increase would be along the nearby corridors.

## **VII. OTHER BUSINESS**

Barbeau said that MnDOT has an interest in city and county participation on the HSIP scoring committee. Jenson expressed interest.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION 6:** It was moved by Koster and seconded by Koutsoukos to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously via voice vote and the meeting was adjourned.

Joe Barbeau  
Recording Secretary