

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAC FUNDING & PROGRAMING COMMITTEE

Thursday, March 18, 2021

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

Committee Members Absent: John Mazzitello (Ramsey County), Innocent Eyoh (MPCA), Robert Ellis (Eden Prairie)

I. CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Thompson called the regular meeting of the Funding & Programming Committee to order at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 18, 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held via teleconference.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved without a vote. A vote is only needed if changes are made to the agenda.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: It was moved by Keel and seconded by Auge to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2021, regular meeting of the Funding & Programming Committee. The motion was approved unanimously via roll call.

IV. TAB REPORT

Koutsoukos reported on the March 17, 2021, TAB meeting.

V. BUSINESS

1. 2021-15: Designation of the F-Line Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Line

Hiniker said that Metro Transit brought formal designation of the F Line arterial bus rapid transit (ABRT) route to the Transportation Committee on March 8, 2021. That line is planned along current Route 10. This action also includes designation of the G and H Lines for future development. This came from a process that began with 19 corridors, eventually narrowed to 10 corridors. These 10 corridors were categorized as short- mid- and long-term, with the F, G, and H Lines as short term. The F Line is being funded through the 2020 Regional Solicitation, which included a \$25 million setaside for ABRT.

Charles Carlson, Metro Transit, said that the route for the F Line was chosen based on current ridership and achievable costs.

MOTION: It was moved by Keel and seconded by Auge to recommend that TAC recommend to TAB awarding \$25 million identified in the 2020 Regional Solicitation to the METRO F Line along current Route 10 from Downtown Minneapolis to Northtown Mall via Central and University Avenues.

VI. INFORMATION

1. Regional Solicitation Survey Results and Sensitivity Analysis

Barbeau shared results of the 2020 Regional Solicitation sensitivity analysis, which did not show many counterintuitive results. He also shared results for surveys sent to applicants, scorers, technical committee members, and TAB members. Staff identified themes for each survey, with the exception of the TAB survey, which only had two replies.

Funding & Programming and TAC cited the acceptance of bicycle and pedestrian bridges in four categories, the low scoring in the new Spot Mobility & Safety category, the lack of prescription in some scoring methodologies, and confusion over what is needed for a layout. Applicants were noted difficulty with elements of the online application, difficulty in responding to the affordable housing sub-measure, and the desire to have a glossary of terms included. Scorers cited the instructions for what scorers can consider, the need for prescriptive scores, review of new measures, prescriptive use of outliers, and overall simplification.

Staff highlighted five key issues: development of how to rate unique projects; geographic balance; bicycle and pedestrian bridges; measure evaluation; and measure simplification.

Hiniker said that the limitation of projects selected along specific BRT routes impacted a bicycle/pedestrian bridge application. He also asked whether any measures are generally scored so well that they could simply be qualifying criteria. Barbeau said that this is not prevalent, though there is a measure in Traffic Management Technologies, based on functional classification that has resulted in no scoring deviation in the last two cycles.

Keel said that applications are costly to prepare and simplification could be valuable. He asked whether the housing measure, which was not very impactful, could be eliminated to save time. He also asked whether Streetlight data could be used to help measure equity. Barbeau replied that the housing performance score is not a time-consuming measure, though the qualitative piece proved to be confusing and may be adjusted. Steve Peterson from the Metropolitan Council said that to help inform geographic balance, staff is going to assess roadway projects with Streetlight to help assess who is using projects.

Stenson asked how the application updates will be approached over the next several months. Barbeau said that the timeline is short and that the Regional Solicitation will be brought through with possible changes. Koutsoukos added that as the applications are being updated, comments will be examined and brought through the process for consideration. Thompson added that if committee members have strong feelings, to send them to staff.

Koster said that he provided comments related to engagement as a barrier, given the pandemic. Similarly, schools are under a lot of pressure and are unlikely to pursue planning grants. He asked about the processes for functional classification, the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN), and Truck Corridors. Koutsoukos said that a process for RBTN changes is being developed. Barbeau said that general outreach is part of the risk assessment and that outreach is also part of equity and they can be discussed separately. Similarly, the discussion of eliminating planning could be discussed for Safe Routes to School. Koutsoukos said that in 2020, applicants were allowed to use previous surveys but added that by the time the applications are due, schools may be back in session. Hiniker said that the RBTN and Bicycle Barriers study updates are going to be requested in late April and the freight changes will be requested some time after that. Peterson said that MnDOT Central Office is conducting functional classification assessment of the entire area. The process will include an appeals process.

Stenson said that the new Spot Mobility & Safety category had some issues, including that seven of 10 projects received a zero in the Truck Tier Corridors score, while the others received the full score, calling into question whether this is an appropriate measure. She added that the outlier question came up in this category and wanted to make sure there will be an opportunity to discuss implementing guidance on how that is handled is needed. Barbeau replied that this issue will be discussed, though creating criteria on when to use outliers could be difficult.

Hiniker said that FTA grants include thresholds for full points, which leads to easier-to-predict scores, versus the Regional Solicitation scores, which tend to generate scores relative to the top-scoring application in a particular measure. Peterson said this occurs in some measures, usually related to regional studies. Barbeau added that the RBTN measure has likely filtered out some applications. Koster suggested vetting rules through TAB for rules and parameters, this might help applicants determine whether to submit.

Kosluchar suggested that consideration of whether to add a category should be early in process so applicants are more aware of the categories and rules.

Ayers-Johnson said that the affordable housing sub-measure was very difficult for applicants to address in relation to its low point value. He said that tracking down the affordable housing was difficult. Barbeau replied that there were a lot of comments on this measure and that it is likely to change. Koutsoukos said that the idea was to identify existing and planned affordable housing so that applicants could get credit, but a simpler method is needed.

Barbeau said that the committee will likely be discussing Regional Solicitation items in each of its next few meetings.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Thompson adjourned the meeting.

Joe Barbeau
Recording Secretary