

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

Thursday, August 19, 2021

**Committee Members Present:** Michael Thompson (Chair, Plymouth), Jack Forslund (Anoka County), Angie Stenson (Carver County), Jenna Fabish (Dakota County), Jason Pieper (Hennepin County), John Mazzitello (Ramsey County), Craig Jenson (Scott County), Joe Ayers-Johnson (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), Paul Oehme (Lakeville), Robert Ellis (Eden Prairie), Jim Kosluchar (Fridley), Ken Ashfeld (Maple Grove), Ethan Fawley (Minneapolis), Ann Weber (St. Paul)

**Committee Members Absent:** None.

## I. CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Chair Thompson called the regular meeting of the Funding & Programming Committee to order at 1:31 p.m. on Thursday, August 19, 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 Ellis and seconded by Brown to approve the minutes of the July 22, 2021, regular meeting of the Funding & Programming Committee. The motion was approved unanimously via roll call.

## IV. TAB REPORT

Koutsoukos reported on the August 18, 2021, TAB meeting.

## V. BUSINESS

1. 2021-37: Scope Change / TIP Amendment Request for Hennepin County Signal Revisions and Pedestrian Improvements

Joe Barbeau, Metropolitan Council, presented this item. He said that Hennepin County is proposing to remove one of six intersections from its project because this intersection is being completed through another project. He stated that the Committee has historically recommended approval of this kind of scope change request. Assuming it does, staff provided two options for federal funding: 1) allow the applicant to retain the full award in recognition that the full project will be built, as requested or 2) reduce the federal award by \$156,600, corresponding to the federal share of the CHAH 35/American Blvd intersection's estimated cost in the original HSIP application.

Keel noted that the county's objectives remain the same with the proposed scope change and supported approving the request with no reduction to the federal award. Chair Thompson echoed Keel's comments.

MOTION: It was moved by Keel and seconded by Brown to recommend approval of the Scope Change and TIP Amendment with no reduction to federal funding. The motion was approved unanimously via roll call.

2. 2021-27: Unique Projects

Steve Peterson, Metropolitan Council, and Hiniker presented on the new Unique Projects category of the Regional Solicitation. Peterson highlighted key scoring criteria and measures. Hiniker noted that due to rounding the scoring criteria weighting created by the Unique Projects Policy Workgroup is shown with a total of 99 percent instead of 100 percent. Hiniker recommended adding the final point to the Racial Equity criterion.

MOTION: It was moved by Fawley and seconded by Spooner-Mueller to recommend approval of the Unique Projects category with an additional percentage point awarded to the Racial Equity scoring criterion. The motion was approved unanimously via roll call.

Following approval of the motion, Hiniker added that a technical committee will be created to provide input to the TAB scoring group, and asked members to volunteer as technical advisors to help with scoring.

3. 2021-28: 2022 Regional Solicitation: Modal Funding Ranges  
4. 2021-29: 2022 Regional Solicitation: Application Categories

Peterson said that Modal Funding Ranges have yet to be resolved at TAB. The attached action transmittal assumes that funding ranges to remain the same as were used in the 2020 Regional Solicitation.

Peterson stated that no changes are proposed to the application categories.

Ethan Fawley said that he would abstain from voting on the modal funding ranges since TAB had not resolved this issue yet.

MOTION: It was moved by McCartney and seconded by Spooner-Mueller to recommend approval of the modal funding ranges (2021-28) and application categories (2021-29). The motion was approved via roll call with Fawley abstaining on 2021-28, which he stated he viewed as a TAB decision.

5. 2021-30: 2022 Regional Solicitation: Funding Category Minimum and Maximum Funding Amounts

Peterson highlighted a table summarizing minimum and maximum federal awards for each modal application category. He said that minimum and maximum federal awards for the Strategic Capacity and Pedestrian Facilities categories have been discussed but remain unresolved.

Hiniker asked Peterson about the maximum dollar amount reward for the Unique Projects modal application category. Peterson explained that an estimated \$900,000 is reserved for the Regional Travel Model and Travel Behavior Inventory, so the \$4 million maximum federal is a rough estimate of how much remains.

Keel said he supported increasing both the minimum for Traffic Management Technologies and the Bicycle/Pedestrian categories from \$250,000 to \$500,000, along with the maximum award for Pedestrian Facilities from \$1M to \$2M or \$3M. McCartney expressed agreement

with increasing the maximum federal award for Pedestrian Facilities but expressed concern over increasing the minimum award for Safe Routes to School, which tends to fund smaller projects. Keel agreed that the minimum federal award for Safe Routes to School could remain small if needed. Koutsoukos noted that in 2020, three applications were awarded under \$500,000, including two just over \$250,000 in the Pedestrian Facilities category, the lowest-funded project in Safe Routes to School was \$335,000. There were eight applications in the Pedestrian Facilities category and six in the Safe Routes to School category. Five and one application requested the full \$1M, respectively.

Ashfeld asked whether Pedestrian Facilities projects have to go through environmental review processes, to which Brown replied in the affirmative. Ashfeld asked whether projects can be bundled, to which Brown responded that this could be discussed but had not been considered before.

Fawley expressed support for increasing the Pedestrian Facilities maximum federal award, favoring a \$2M maximum. He said that it can be difficult to bundle signalized intersection projects at a cost lower than the current maximum federal award and expressed support for a higher maximum federal award to help fix intersections that are most dangerous for pedestrians.

Keel recommended increasing the minimum federal award for Traffic Management Technologies, Pedestrian Facilities, and Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities to \$500,000, increasing the maximum federal award for Pedestrian Facilities to \$2M, and leaving the minimum federal award for Safe Routes to School at \$250,000. Koutsoukos said that the lowest request in the Traffic Management Technologies category was \$1.58M and for Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities, the smallest federal award as \$388,000 and the smallest requested was \$383,000. Keel noted that there are administrative costs to applicants and MnDOT Metro District State Aid throughout this process.

Stenson expressed support for keeping the minimum federal award for Pedestrian Facilities based on the cost of prior projects. Hiniker expressed concern in using prior applications to guide future minimum and maximum federal awards, as having a minimum federal award lower than the existing \$250,000 might allow for more projects to be funded, even with a higher maximum. TAC member Marc Culver expressed agreement with having lower minimums and questioned the intent behind having minimum federal awards.

Peterson suggested keeping the \$4M maximum federal award for Unique Projects and adding a footnote explaining why this figure may change slightly.

Thompson suggested there was a consensus on raising the maximum federal award for Pedestrian Facilities to \$2M and the minimum federal award for Traffic Management Technologies to \$500,000.

MOTION: It was moved by Keel and seconded by Fawley to recommend the 2020 federal minimum and maximum funding amounts with an increase in the minimum federal award for Traffic Management Technologies to \$500,000 and an increase in the maximum award for Pedestrian Facilities to \$2M.

Fawley requested that more information be given to TAB about the impacts of the \$10M maximum in Strategic Capacity. McCartney volunteered to help TAB understand the costs of Strategic Capacity projects. Brown said that she can provide total project costs. Koutsoukos said that staff has some information as well.

Keel and Fawley agreed to include in the motion a footnote that the Unique Projects maximum award is the total amount available for the category. The motion was approved unanimously via roll call.

Turner Bergen questioned Metropolitan Council staff about the use of “multi-use trails” in application categories and suggested dropping “trails” from the term to make it clearer to applicants that bicycle and pedestrian projects serve transportation purposes as opposed to purely recreational purposes. Peterson replied that he is open to changing the terminology. Hiniker commented that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities category purpose statement may already specify that projects must serve a transportation purpose, and that staff could revisit this offline.

6. 2021-31: 2022 Regional Solicitation: Weighting of Criteria and Measures
7. 2021-32: 2022 Regional Solicitation: Measures and Scoring Guidance

Peterson first presented on weighting of criteria and measures, highlighting changes to the draft weighting for Spot Mobility & Safety criterion and said that both TAC and TAB agreed with moving points from Role in the Regional Transportation System and Economy to Safety. Pieper pointed out a math error in the proposed changes. Peterson and Barbeau acknowledged the potential rounding error.

Peterson then presented on the measures and scoring guidance, highlighting one change to MnDOT’s HSIP application that allows applicants to use two different methods of obtaining crash data.

Koutsoukos noted that applicants are asked similar questions in Measures 5A and 5B-1 in the Public Engagement/Risk Assessment criterion in Safe Routes to School and suggested consolidating the question and redistributing points. She also noted that parent survey results may be harder to obtain given the COVID-19 pandemic. Chair Thompson suggested Metropolitan Council staff rework the language and bring it to TAC. Peterson agreed that the parent survey public engagement measure may need to be reconsidered. Koutsoukos wondered whether points in the Safe Routes to School category need to be redistributed if parent-survey results are no longer required. Fawley and Ayers-Johnson expressed support for consolidating scoring criteria.

MOTION: It was moved by Hiniker and seconded by Koutsoukos to recommend approval of the weighting, measures, and scoring guidance while moving the points from 5A to 5B-1 of the Public Engagement/Risk Assessment criterion of Safe Routes to School.

Stenson asked whether staff had considered implementing a variable buffer size by community designation in the Equity and Affordable Housing criterion. Peterson answered that staff were satisfied with a uniform buffer. Stenson also asked for more information about the recently simplified pedestrian safety measures and speed limit requirement in sub-measure 2, stating that she disagreed with the 30-mph speed limit threshold. Peterson explained that changes were made to the pedestrian safety measures based on prior committee feedback. Heidi Schallberg, Metropolitan Council, said that the 30-mph speed limit threshold was created based on crash data and will act as a multiplier in the scoring process. Stenson suggested increasing the threshold to 45-mph. Schallberg responded that many crashes happen on streets with speed limits less than 45-mph and supported keeping the language as is.

Pieper wondered if the group wanted to revisit the changed language around average annual daily traffic (AADT) in the Transit Usage measure. Chair Thompson said that the new

language could offer applicants greater flexibility. Peterson said that this change was inspired by MnDOT's new language around average annual daily traffic (AADT) and would help maintain consistency in applications. Pieper questioned whether a consistent approach to AADT should be explored so everyone is on the same playing field. Kosluchar asked whether this new language is used in other applications. Peterson responded that it is used elsewhere but could be provided in additional sections. He explained that the transit work group, TAB, and TAC decided that applicants should be allowed to choose the year to use for new transit ridership as long as it is consistent for each peer route. He said that this would not allow applicants to reinstate transit routes that were reduced or suspended due to the pandemic in the Transit Expansion category. He also said that existing ridership in Transit Modernization is proposed to be calculated as 75% from 2019 AADT and 25% from 2020 AADT.

Ayers-Johnson applauded efforts to standardize scoring and pare down wording in the pedestrian safety measures but thought both could be further simplified. He suggested creating a speed-limit threshold between 30-mph and 45-mph.

Ayers-Johnson said he mostly agreed with the Layout measure of the risk assessment but questioned the language implying that only MnDOT-approved layouts can receive full points for projects that impact MnDOT roads. He proposed creating a middle-ground threshold that could earn the applicant points without MnDOT approval. He also questioned the timeline of the risk assessment because layouts should not be decided upon going into FHWA environmental evaluations. Brown said that the 50% penalty to applicants without MnDOT-approved layouts may be too harsh and suggested adding a new threshold at 75% for applicants who show they have worked with MnDOT but do not yet have a MnDOT-approved layout. She agreed with Ayers-Johnson that the timeline conflict with FHWA is an issue. McCartney explained that in the Metro District, MnDOT avoids layout approvals and letters of support that may interfere with regional programming. She said that the word layout means different things to different people and that she does not want MnDOT to influence the regional planning process. Brown provided an example to demonstrate the need for a middle-ground threshold between 50% and 100%. Craig Jenson questioned the MnDOT layout requirement. Brown suggested adding a new threshold at 75%.

Hiniker and Koutsoukos agreed to rescind the original motion.

MOTION: It was moved by Hiniker and seconded by Koutsoukos to recommend approval of the weighting, measures, and scoring guidance while moving the points from 5A to 5B-1 of the Public Engagement/Risk Assessment criterion of Safe Routes to School and adding an additional scoring threshold at 75% for the Layout section of Risk Assessment. The motion was approved unanimously via roll call.

8. 2021-33: 2022 Regional Solicitation: Project Selection Guarantees
9. 2021-34: 2022 Regional Solicitation: Qualifying and Eligibility

Peterson highlighted funding guarantees and limitations related to roadway functional classifications, ABRT, transit, and bridges. Based on prior TAB discussions, Peterson raised the issue of geographic balance as it relates to maximum funding amounts and percentages for the group to discuss. Pieper reminded members of other methods to promote geographic balance such as over programming. Keel commented that streetlight data can help identify project users throughout the region and provide a better basis for geographic balance than county geographies.

Peterson presented on qualifying and eligibility, highlighting edits to the language in the Transit Expansion category. Hiniker commented that the qualifying criteria in Unique Projects may limit applications. Peterson responded that this issue has been addressed.

MOTION: It was moved by Pieper and seconded by Oehme to recommended approval of the guarantees and limitations along with qualifying and eligibility. The motion was approved unanimously via roll call.

10. 2021-35: 2022 Regional Solicitation: Release for Public Comment

Peterson laid out the timeline of the public comment period.

MOTION: It was moved by Kosluchar and seconded by Eyoh to recommend releasing the 2022 for public comment. The motion was approved unanimously via roll call.

11. 2021-36: 2022 Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Application: Release for Public Comment

Peterson and Barbeau presented on the 2022 Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) application. Barbeau highlighted minor changes to the language.

Stenson asked why MnDOT is able to apply for projects in this solicitation. Peterson described the funding pots available to the region and state and said that MnDOT applies for funding in the competitive process alongside cities and counties. He suggested bringing this discussion to TAC to fully answer. Kaare Festvog, MnDOT, said that MnDOT funding from the competitive process has been lower in recent years than it had been historically. Peterson asked whether MnDOT also participates in the competitive process in greater Minnesota, to which Festvog replied in the affirmative. Chair Thompson suggested bringing this conversation to TAC. Brown said that MnDOT used to have greater decision-making powers over funding. Koutsoukos explained that MnDOT's HSIP Solicitation and the Metropolitan Council's Regional Solicitation processes are now aligned in terms of timing.

Pieper noted that program years shown in the application need to be updated.

MOTION: It was moved by Spooner-Mueller and seconded by Brown to recommend releasing the 2022 Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) application for public comment. The motion was approved unanimously via roll call.

## **VI. INFORMATION**

None.

## **VII. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Thompson adjourned the meeting.

Joe Barbeau  
Recording Secretary