

Action Transmittal

Transportation Advisory Board



Committee Meeting Date: July 20, 2023

Date: July 13, 2023

Action Transmittal: 2023-43

Release of 2024 Regional Solicitation and Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Solicitations

To: TAC Funding & Programming Committee
Prepared By: Elaine Koutsoukos, TAB Coordinator, 651-602-1717
Steve Peterson, Senior Manager, 651-602-1819
Joe Barbeau, Senior Planner, 651-302-1705

Requested Action

Release of the 2024 Regional Solicitation and Highway Safety Improvement (HSIP) Solicitations.

Recommended Motion

That the TAC Funding & Programming Committee recommend approval of the release of the 2024 Regional Solicitation and Highway Safety Improvement (HSIP) Solicitations.

Background and Purpose

The Regional Solicitation for Federal Transportation Projects is part of the Metropolitan Council's federally required continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Historically, the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area has selected projects for funding from two federal programs: the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program. However, more funding sources have been created in recent years, including the federal Carbon Reduction Program, the federal PROTECT program and the Active Transportation Sales Tax, which is funded through a new metro sales tax. Following completion of the 2022 Regional Solicitation, staff worked with the TAC Funding & Programming Committee, TAC, and TAB on updates to the Regional Solicitation. A draft Solicitation with approved changes was subsequently released for public review. The attached materials include applications, introduction, forms, and qualifying criteria for the 2024 Regional Solicitation. Approximately \$250 million is expected to be available in this solicitation. Most of the funding is for fiscal years 2028 and 2029. The exception is for the travel demand management application, which will solicit about \$1.2 million for 2027 and 2028, and the unique projects application, which will solicit about \$4.0 million for 2027 and 2028.

Simultaneous to the release of the Regional Solicitation is release of the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) solicitation. HSIP is a core federal program defined in FAST Act. HSIP is designed to achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads, including nonstate-owned public roads and roads on tribal lands. HSIP requires a data-driven, strategic approach to improving highway safety on all public roads that focuses on performance. MnDOT conducts the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) solicitation, and the proposed projects are evaluated by a selection committee comprised of transportation professionals that includes members of the TAC. With guidance from its technical committees and a recommendation from this selection committee, the TAB's role is to approve the Solicitation

criteria and selection of projects to be awarded HSIP funds. The draft district program criteria are attached for review and comment.

Relationship to Regional Policy

TAB develops and issues a Regional Solicitation for transportation funding. The region's Transportation Policy Plan includes transportation safety policies strategies, and the HSIP solicitation is consistent with that plan.

Staff Analysis

A public comment period recently concluded and as a result staff is proposing the following clarifications and updates to what was released for public comment by TAB at its May 18, 2023, meeting. Note that staff suggests no clarifications and updates to the HSIP Solicitation as the public comment responses were focused on the Regional Solicitation. Yellow-highlighted changes were made following the public comment period.

- In the Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities application, staff suggests clarifying in the scoring guidance for the RBTN scoring measure (Measure 1) that projects not connected to the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN) “will be awarded 50 points if they are a part of a local system and identified within an adopted county, city, or regional parks implementing agency plan” (See page 188).
- Unique Projects: In response to public comments on unique projects staff suggests the following clarifications (See pages 227 – 238):
 - Rewording of evaluation criterion 1 (Significance) to eliminate reference to “scalability” in favor of focusing on “regional impact.” in Measure A, along with clarification of Measures B and C as rating expandability and newness of approach, respectively.
 - Adjusting the five criteria weights to total 100% (they had totaled 101%). This includes a one-point reduction to Significance, A one-point increase to Environmental impacts, and a one-point decrease to Partnerships.
- Bridge Qualification: To keep up with MnDOT State-Aids’ updated federal bridge funding eligibility requirements, staff suggests changing bridge eligibility to require a Local Planning Index (LPI) of less than 60 or a National Bridge Inventory (NBI) Appraisal Rating of three or less in one of three categories (deck geometry, approach roadway, and waterway adequacy). The draft released for public comment retained the previous requirement of NBI Appraisal Rating of 6 or less for rehabilitation and 4 or less for replacement, with no reference to LPI. (See pages 17 and 36).
- Scoring Guidance Document: Prior to release of the application (roughly September 1), staff will produce a reference document focused only on scoring guidance as requested in one public comment.
- In the Equity and Affordable Housing criterion, staff suggests replacing the phrase “equity population” with “disadvantaged communities” (See pages 49 and 54 for an example).
- Active Transportation: The recently enacted transportation sales tax allocates an estimated \$24 Million per year to TAB for active transportation. Because this law was passed following the release of the Regional Solicitation for public comment, no reference to the active transportation funding was included in the public review. Staff suggests the following pilot project approach for distributing active transportation funds through the 2024 Regional Solicitation (See pages 4-5, and 37-38):
 - Designating the funds to the Pedestrian and Safe Routes to School application. The Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities category is also eligible to receive the funds, but this early designation sets expectations to applicants regarding funding sources. If there is more active transportation funding than applied for, either some would be provided to multiuse trail and bicycle facilities projects or TAB would defer the funding to the 2026 Regional Solicitation. TAB may also use federal funds to fund further down the rankings lists in the Pedestrian and



Safe Routes to School categories. Therefore, the application will enable applicants in those categories to note whether they would accept federal funding, if offered.

- Requiring a 10% match from applicants. The law does not require a local match on the sales tax funds. More input is needed from the committees, but as a starting point, staff suggests 10% to promote a minimal local financial contribution, but at a low enough value to not discourage agencies from applying, especially smaller ones.
- The 2024 funding cycle will be considered a pilot project to financial resources out to applicants in a timely manner and to get active transportation projects constructed. A longer-term approach to spending active transportation funds will be established during the Regional Solicitation Evaluation.

The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) is being provided with the public comments to the draft Regional Solicitation at its July 19, 2023, meeting. Staff may bring additional items for possible changes brought up in that meeting.

Routing

To	Action Requested	Date Completed (Scheduled)
TAC Planning or TAC Funding & Programming Committee	Review & Recommend	July 20, 2023
Technical Advisory Committee	Review & Recommend	August 2, 2023
Transportation Advisory Board	Review & Recommend (or Adopt)	August 16, 2023
Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee	Review & Recommend (or Adopt)	August 28, 2023
Metropolitan Council	Review & Recommend (or Adopt)	September 13, 2023

