

2026 Unified Planning Work Program Preview



May 2025



Contents

Cover	0
Contents	1
Overview	2
2025 UPWP Study Updates	5
2026 UPWP Studies Under Consideration	9
Contact Information	16
Project Descriptions	17

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

2025 TRANSPORTATION
UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM FOR
THE TWIN CITIES METROPOLITAN AREA



Adopted October 23, 2024

The UPWP is an annual plan of federally-funded and Council-involved transportation planning activities.

- Outlines and describes transportation planning activities for the calendar year
- Serves as application for federal transportation planning funds
- Includes planning studies' descriptions, schedules, costs, deliverables
- Includes partner-led studies that include Met Council staff

UPWP Development and Adoption Schedule (Tentative)

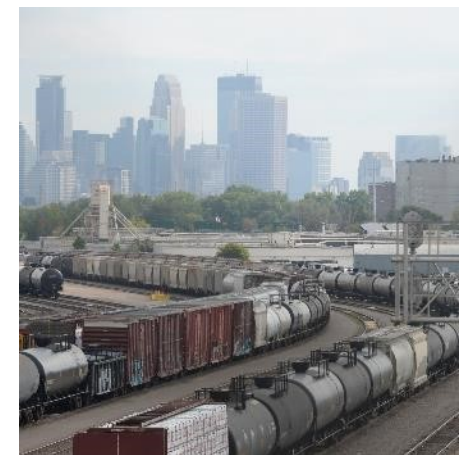


- **May:** Gather input on planning study needs and topics and write draft document
- **June:** TAC Planning reviews and recommends release for public comment. FHWA, MnDOT, and other agencies review
 - *Tentative public comment period June 12 – July 14*
- **August:** TAC and TAB reviews and recommends draft UPWP for adoption
- **September:** Transportation Committee reviews and recommends, and Council adopts
- **October:** UPWP sent to MnDOT and FHWA for approval

Today's Goal

Review current planning studies and identify any opportunities in 2026

- Update on 2025 UPWP projects
- Share consultant projects and internal efforts under consideration for 2026
- **Discuss: Opportunities, needs, and priorities for 2026 and beyond**



2025 UPWP Study Updates



Studies & Major Projects – Began Prior to 2025

Federally Funded Studies

- Regional Solicitation Evaluation
- Metropolitan Highway System Harms, Impacts, and Mitigation Priorities Study
- Congestion Management Plan Handbook Pilot Corridor Project

Federally Funded Studies cont.

- Transportation Research Program
- Regional Transportation & Climate Change Multimodal Measures*
- Evaluation of Forecast Accuracy & Robustness

Locally Funded Studies

- Midtown Greenway Bicycle & Pedestrian Trail Expansion Planning Project*
- Regional Aviation System Plan*
- Equity Evaluation of Regional Transportation Investment Processes*

*Projects will be completed in 2025

Studies & Major Projects – Getting Underway in 2025



In Procurement or Under Contract

- Microtransit Framework Policy
- Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan
- Electric Vehicle Public Charging Needs Analysis
- Regional Sidewalk Dataset Study, Phase 1
- Outreach & Engagement Studies for Transportation Studies Master Contract
- Pedestrian-Bicycle Demand Estimation Tool

Studies Upcoming in 2025 and Carrying into 2026



2025 Projects in Scope Development & Under Review

- ActivitySim Local Implementation, Phase 3/Regional Model Work
- Community Assessment and Engagement Guide
- Equity Evaluation Framework and Tool Training*
- EV Public Engagement & City Support*
- Framework for Accessibility to Public Health Destinations
- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy Development*
- Highway System Optimization Study*
- Integrating Travel Demand Management into Highway Project Development
- Safer Connections to Transit Study
- Sidewalk Dataset Study, Phase 2

***Some projects may be modified or removed to ensure compliance with federal orders and updated regional priorities.**

2026 UPWP: New Planning Studies Under Consideration



2026 UPWP – New Studies

Considerations & Constraints

- **Budget constraints** – many of the 2025 projects have significant carryover budgets
- **Staff capacity** – staff available to manage projects and continue to advance important staff-led work like the 2026 Regional Solicitation may be limited
- **2050 TPP regional implementation priorities** – providing needed technical assistance or guidance in a timely manner to support the next comprehensive plan update
- **Federal Policy Guidance** – some work may change to respond to federal guidance



Studies Under Consideration (1)

Complete Streets Local Implementation Guide

- Respond to IIJA's increased design flexibility in federal-aid projects
- Provide context-sensitive guidance and best practices
- Actions for prioritizing projects

2050 Comprehensive Plan Tools & Guides

- Building out supportive tools and guidance to help local governments develop their comprehensive plans to align with the 2050 Regional Development Guide
- Will need input from partners on which tools/guides are most important

Studies Under Consideration (2)

Arterial Modernization Priorities Study

- In response to public comment letters from local partners this study will better identify and understand the needs, and prioritize corridors for improvement and modernization on MnDOT's system of non-freeway principal and minor arterial roadways.

Existing Interchange Modernization Study

- Identify needed improvements to existing interchanges and prioritize locations for investment
- Consider:
 - Presence/absence of multimodal facilities
 - Mobility
 - Resiliency
 - Safety
 - Freight
 - Others as identified

Studies Under Consideration (3)

Managed Lane Vision & System Study, Phase 4

- Update the 2017 MnPASS/E-ZPass System study
- Update investment objectives and policies
- Make recommendations for potential managed lane locations
- Establish overall long-term vision and priority for managed lanes

Highway System Optimization Study

- Examine MnDOT's freeways and arterials to understand each corridor's importance to local and regional travel while accounting for capacity of parallel routes and needed redundancy of the system. This study will identify segments that may be candidates for road diets or other improvements to reduce the roadway right-of-way footprint.

Studies Under Consideration (4)

Regional Model Work

- *Regional Model Roadway Network Speed Update*
 - Improving the way the model calculates speed
- *Network Management Software Update*
 - Small enhancements and bug fixes
- *Freight Model Update*
 - Incorporate best practices and findings from 2023 Urban Freight Study

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy Development

- Build on existing GHG reduction strategies to develop local priorities and implementation details. It will consider electrification, mode choice, low carbon construction, and operations solutions and implementation strategies.

Discussion



2026 Work Program

- Actions to adopt the 2026 UPWP will start at TAC Planning in June 2025.
- All major studies must be identified in the 2026 UPWP
- **Are there major policy areas of concern or interest for 2026 that are not addressed in past or existing work program projects?**
- **Are there needs for regional system studies to help prioritize transportation investments (ie EZ Pass System study)?**
- **Are there other internal or consultant study efforts that we should consider?**

Thank you

Bethany Brandt-Sargent

Planning Analyst, MTS Planning

bethany.brandt-sargent@metc.state.mn.us

Jed Hanson

Senior Planner, MTS Planning

jed.hanson@metc.state.mn.us

Amy Vennewitz

Deputy Director, MTS Planning

amy.vennewitz@metc.state.mn.us





2025 UPWP Project Descriptions

Purpose & Key Tasks



Regional Model Work

Travel Model Speed Data Improvement

- Identify and prepare road speed data for model inputs and validation
- Evaluate methods, classifications, and functions for calculating speeds, including roadway classification schemes, area classification schemes, volume-delay functions, and E-ZPass diversion functions

Freight Model Update

- Start of multi-year project
- Incorporate best practices in freight modeling
- Address findings and recommendations from the 2023 Urban Freight Distribution Study

Network Wrangler Update

- On-call contract to make small enhancements and bug fixes in model network management software.

Aviation Planning & Implementation

Purpose

Support MAC work and update the Aviation System Plan

Tasks

- **Aviation System Plan update**
 - Review and update aviation policies and actions with regional partners.
 - Amend TPP with updated Aviation System Plan.
 - Public comment draft to be reviewed in July.
- **Other Work**
 - Tracking regional aviation planning work and providing technical assistance to staff when needed.
 - Monitor, support and coordinate with MAC planning initiatives.
 - Coordinate with MnDOT and FAA planning efforts.



Community Assessment & Engagement Guide



Purpose

Provide guidance on identifying and defining community demographics and characteristics, considering history, methods for mapping community assets and context, and engaging with communities about their transportation needs.

Tasks

- Review and summarize relevant local, regional, state and federal work related to methodologies for identifying community characteristics and assets.
- Engage community members and our partner staff and policy makers at key points to develop this guide.
- Develop a guide to provide assistance on gaining and using community knowledge during project development.

CMP Handbook Pilot Corridor Study



Purpose

Assess the guidance outlined in the CMP Corridor Analysis Handbook to demonstrate and refine how the handbook applies to corridors across the region.

Tasks

- Work with regional partners to implement the methodology outlined in the CMP Handbook on corridors.
- Gather feedback and refine methodology, guidance, and work products to ensure the Handbook is applicable to corridors throughout the region.
- Coordinate with the CMP Advisory Committee any potential changes to the CMP Handbook.
- Test and refine Handbook based upon feedback from the CMP Advisory Committee.

Electric Vehicle Work



Electric Vehicle Public Charging Needs Analysis

- Evaluate public charging gaps that are anticipated after planned investments
- Procurement spring, project continues into 2026

Electric Vehicle Public Engagement & City Support

- Identify and address knowledge gaps with key stakeholders
- Procurement summer, project continues into 2026

Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Program

- Still waiting on update from Federal Government

Equity Evaluation of Regional Transportation Investments Training



Purpose

This project continues implementation of the Equity Evaluation of Regional Transportation Investments study with training for local partners on the use and application of the framework and tool.

Tasks

- Develop training plan and schedule and deliver training sessions.
- Review evaluations and implement any needed changes.

Evaluation of Forecast Accuracy & Robustness

Purpose

Several recent corridor studies and projects have demonstrated that regional traffic growth over the past two decades is inconsistent with previous highway forecasts. An examination is needed to assess the accuracy of past forecasts and to identify underlying causes of any discrepancies and to develop recommendations to improve the forecasting practices.

Tasks

- Review past corridor-level highway forecasts in the region from 2010 to 2020.
- Conduct an analysis of overall accuracy and the causes of any inaccuracies.
- Review current forecasting practices and make recommendations for improvement.



Integrating TDM into Highway Planning Processes



Purpose

Build on Regional TDM Action Plan, 2050 TPP, and Congestion Management Process to integrate TDM considerations into highway project development processes as one action to help reduce the need for highway expansion.

Tasks

- Document existing highway project development processes for different project types where TDM may be an appropriate tool.
- Relate TDM Action Plan to different project types to create a context sensitive approach.
- Create tools that can easily integrate into existing processes.
- Identify cases studies to illustrate real world examples of approaches.

Framework for Accessibility to Public Health Destinations



Purpose

Accessibility measures frequently focus on how many jobs people reach in a certain amount of time by different travel modes (for example, bus, car, bike, etc.), but people need to access more than just jobs and shopping centers. To maintain and improve their quality of life, people need access to services such as food, health care, educational facilities, restorative open spaces, and social and cultural events. This study will identify these types of locations and how to incorporate into accessibility measures.

Tasks

- Work with partners to identify and then create an inventory of essential destinations in different community contexts (including rural areas) that positively contribute to public health.
- Expand existing accessibility analysis to include an evaluation of accessibility to these public health destinations across the region.

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy Development



Purpose

Build on existing GHG reduction strategies to develop local priorities and implementation details. It will consider electrification, mode choice, low carbon construction, and operations solutions and implementation strategies.

Tasks

- Summarize existing GHG reduction strategies in the TPP, MN Climate Action Framework and MnDOT's Carbon Reduction Strategy
- Scenario planning to explore impacts of potential climate strategies.
- Develop local priorities and implementation details.
- Engage partner staff and policy makers.

Highway System Optimization Study



Purpose

Examine MnDOT's freeways and arterials to understand each corridor's importance to local and regional travel while accounting for capacity of parallel routes and needed redundancy of the system. This study will identify segments that may be candidates for road diets or other improvements.

Tasks

- Identify any benefits for reducing capacity on the freeway or arterial system.
- Identify excess capacity or opportunity for reduced capacity as well as corridors where capacity should not be removed.
- Document missing links in the existing system such as missing interchange ramp movements or overpasses could add needed redundancy to the system.

Metropolitan Highway System Harms, Impacts, & Mitigation Priorities



Purpose

Identify past and on-going harms caused by the metropolitan highway system and identify and prioritize potential mitigation actions and investments

Tasks

- Identify range and impacts of harms experienced.
- Identify corridors, communities, demographics of those impacted by past and ongoing harms of the highway system.
- Identify and describe actions, mitigations, investments that could potentially repair and mitigate harms and potential costs and funding sources.
- Evaluate current processes and develop policies for preventing future harms and impacts.

Microtransit Policy Framework



Purpose

To develop regional policy as well as performance and design guidance microtransit like those for fixed route service in the TPP. The region's microtransit services fill various roles such as connecting to transitways, replacing local fixed-route service, first-last mile solution, and coverage service. Transit providers currently have different approaches to scheduling technology, fare structure, vehicle type, and other factors that make rider experience inconsistent.

Tasks

- Document existing micro transit services in the region, consistencies and inconsistencies, service purpose and features, expansion plans, and evaluation measures.
- Develop region-wide policy recommendations to improve rider experience on microtransit across systems (e.g. fares or transfers).
- Develop guidance to assist transit providers and local communities with implementing microtransit service across various regional contexts (e.g. performance evaluation or service design)

Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion



Purpose

Plan a continuous and dedicated bicycle/pedestrian trail from the eastern terminus of the current Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis across the Mississippi River and terminating at Allianz Field in St. Paul with trail connection approaching U of M and Prospect Park neighborhood.

Tasks

- Develop concept layouts for extending the Greenway and to advance it into project development
- Coordination with Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway on acceptable trail options within its right-of-way
- High-level review of likely environmental issues and recommendations for appropriate environmental review process to move project forward
- Final Report will include a Project Implementation Plan that lays out the processes and detailed steps to complete design and construction

Outreach & Engagement for Transportation Studies



Master contract to supplement engagement for ongoing transportation studies

- Amending the existing master contract to select 3-5 firms; selection is in progress.
- Multiple efforts used/using the master contract to date
 - Travel Demand Management study
 - Transportation Policy Plan Goals and Objectives engagement
 - Transportation Needs Assessment
 - Regional Solicitation public engagement

Pedestrian & Bicycle Demand Estimation Tool



Purpose

Develop a tool that spatially estimates current pedestrian and bicycle travel and identifies areas with future or latent demand. The tool could inform project selection processes and provide technical assistance for local transportation and comprehensive planning.

Tasks

- Implementing partner stakeholder engagement
- Develop a model to estimate current and future travel
- Validate model and mapping tool as implemented by Met Council staff
- Provide recommendations on use cases and frequency of updates

Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan

Purpose

Federal law requires large MPOs to adopt and periodically update a Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan. Updating the region's coordinated plan will increase understanding of public transit and human service transportation coordination opportunities for better coordination to minimize service duplication and unmet needs in the region.

Tasks

- Review related plans and activities in the region and compare to peers
- Establish steering committee with agency partner representation to provide plan direction.
- Review changes in state and federal laws or rules.
- Establish and prioritize needs and strategies for associated federal funding sources that support coordination of human services transportation and public transit.



Regional Sidewalk Data Inventory



Develop sidewalk data set for regional planning

- Need for routable data covering MPO planning area in 9 counties
- Work with local and internal partners on identifying initial data attributes and level of detail
- Two phases
 - Phase 1: Identify data needs/level of detail and technical options
 - Phase 2: Data collection/validation

Regional Solicitation Evaluation



Purpose

Align the 2050 Regional Development Guide and 2050 Transportation Policy Plan guidance to funding decisions in the 2026 Regional Solicitation and beyond.

Tasks

- Complete a history of solicitation policies and structure and before-and-after analysis of previously funded projects.
- Conduct a peer review of other MPO federal funding allocation processes.
- Develop evaluation criteria, scoring measures and scoring guidance to implement the recommended application structure.
- Identify options on how new federal funding sources such as Carbon Reduction, PROTECT or regional sales tax funding could be brought into the Solicitation.
- Simplify the overall application and project selection process.
- Incorporate quantitative and qualitative performance measures into Regional Solicitation decision-making.

Regional Transportation and Climate Change Multimodal Measures Study

Purpose

Develop methods to evaluate the greenhouse gas emissions impacts of transportation projects.

Tasks

- Inventory and evaluate current methods for estimating greenhouse gases (GHGs) in Regional Solicitation, Transportation Improvement Program and Transportation Policy Plan
- Review and summarize national and local best practices
- Review TPP estimates against state of knowledge regarding induced demand
- Recommend new and updated methodologies to estimate GHGs

Safer Connections to Transit



Purpose

The Regional Pedestrian Safety Action Plan identified that significant percentages of severe pedestrian crashes happen near transit stops or stations, although this does not mean that transit is *causing* these crashes. This project will conduct additional study on the relationship with pedestrian safety and elements of transit system design and roadway design that can affect traffic safety outcomes for pedestrians.

Tasks

- Engage riders and nearby residents on safety-related barriers to accessing nearby transit services.
- Analyze data for risk factors relating to transit system design and severity of pedestrian crashes.
- Create methodology and identify locations where improvements may be needed and strategies to address those needs.

Transportation Research Program



- *Transit Impact Research Program* will fund a portion of a transit research project to be selected in early 2026 by the funding partners of the program at the UMN. This is an activity the Council participates in on an annual basis.
- *Access Across America* pooled fund study, led by MnDOT, provides locally focused accessibility data sets and reports from the Accessibility Observatory, as well as funding a set of Council-directed accessibility analyses that focus on specific analytical needs with the University Accessibility Observatory.
- *Applied Research in Transportation (ART) Program*, led by the Center for Transportation Studies (CTS), begins in 2025 as a pilot to address time-sensitive research questions in a six-to-twelve-month timeframe. To reinforce the applied nature of the program, ART projects must directly address a current process, document, or policy need.