

# 2026 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

*Federally Funded Project Descriptions*



# REGIONAL SOLICITATION EVALUATION

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

This study, which started in late 2023, is evaluating the entire Regional Solicitation program and process for selecting projects. **The main purpose of the Regional Solicitation Evaluation is to tie project selection more closely to the Imagine 2050 Regional Development Guide and the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan.** In doing so, the MPO will ensure that the region's current transportation goals, objectives, and policies are being incorporated into project selection in the Regional Solicitation.

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Assess the outcomes of projects selected in the past decade (since the last Regional Solicitation Evaluation and Redesign in 2014).
- Create policymaker and technical working groups to advise on the Solicitation changes.
- Evaluate the entire Regional Solicitation program process for selecting projects that includes identifying project application categories, selection criteria and measures for selecting projects.
- Work closely with stakeholders to identify the best use of the federal transportation dollars coming to the MPO.
- This project will provide a complete Regional Solicitation application package for use in the 2026 solicitation.

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## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q4 2023 – Q3 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$919,000	\$90,000

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# OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT SERVICES FOR TRANSPORTATION STUDIES

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

The Metropolitan Council has a master contract with consultants to provide outreach and engagement services on an as-needed basis for two years. **These consultants will plan, design and facilitate outreach activities to support transportation studies and activities identified in the Unified Planning Work Program.**

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Selected consultants will undertake various tasks, as needed, as part of transportation studies, plans, or projects including outreach and engagement planning, engagement activity facilitation, community consultation, and measuring and report.

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## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026 ☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Ongoing, current contract covers 2025 through 2027

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$100,000 annually	\$100,000

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# INTEGRATING TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT INTO HIGHWAY PLANNING PROCESSES

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

The [Regional Travel Demand Management \(TDM\) Action Plan](#) and [2050 Transportation Policy Plan](#) identified a need to better integrate TDM considerations into highway project development processes as one action to help reduce the need to for highway expansion. The [Congestion Management Process](#) also places TDM as high-priority strategies for congested corridors. However, the TDM strategies are high level and do not provide detailed implementation guidance for project managers to put into practice. **This project will create detailed tools for how TDM strategies can be incorporated in different phases of highway project development, including post-construction considerations.**

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Work with partners to 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, such as guides, decision matrices, and model processes, that can easily integrate into existing processes.
- Identify cases studies, as available, that illustrate real world examples of applied approaches.

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## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q4 2023 – Q3 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$150,000	\$100,000

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# METROPOLITAN HIGHWAY SYSTEM HARMS, IMPACTS, & MITIGATION PRIORITIES

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

It is well established that the construction of the Metropolitan Highway System imposed significant impacts, costs, and burdens on communities and people in the path of and living nearby new freeways. Communities near the Metropolitan Highway System today still bear the harms, impacts and consequences of the Metropolitan Highway System both from the original construction and the continued operation and presence of these facilities. This study will identify the long-term and continuing harms/impacts of the Metropolitan Highway System on adjacent communities and populations and propose mitigation investments and funding for eventual inclusion in the regional plan.

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Create and implement an engagement plan for the overall project emphasizing engagement with communities most impacted by the Metropolitan Highway System.
- Identify and categorize the community harms/impacts and develop criteria and measures for quantifying the harms/impacts.
- Identify transportation related and other investment types that could mitigate the past and continuing harms/impacts to the affected communities.
- Identify investment types and funding programs and sources for the high priority corridors and locations.

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## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q4 2024 – Q2 2027

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$980,000	\$450,000

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# PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE DEMAND ESTIMATION TOOL

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

The Met Council has assessed various existing tools for estimating pedestrian and bicycle demand include MnDOT's Suitability for the Pedestrian and Cycling Environment (SPACE) and Priority Areas for Walking (PAWS) tools. These tools have some value, but the Met Council is interested in a tool that is specifically developed for the metro area and is able to be updated regularly with new data. A new tool would provide better estimates of existing and latent demand for funding prioritization processes like the Regional Solicitation. The tool could also assist local agencies in planning for pedestrians and bicycles when working on local transportation plans or comprehensive plans.

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Identify factors of pedestrian and bicycle demand using a combination of literature review; data analysis from sources like observational data, land use, key destinations, and demographics; and stakeholder engagement.
- Design a maintainable mapping tool that estimates pedestrian and bicycle travel and future travel potential.
- Validate output using observed data and stakeholder reviews.
- Test application of tool with a set of expected use-cases.
- Provide recommendations on the frequency of updates and opportunities to use the tool in project selection processes.

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## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q3 2025 – Q2 2027

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$200,000	\$100,000

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# PUBLIC TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION COORDINATED PLAN

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

Federal law requires large MPOs to adopt and periodically update a Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan. The current plan was last adopted in January 2020 and is recommended to be updated approximately every five years. **The purpose of the plan is to increase understanding of public transit and human service transportation coordination among stakeholders, elected officials, and the Metropolitan Council in the metro area and identify opportunities for better coordination with the assistance of federal funding, especially regarding service duplication and unmet needs in the region.**

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Review past plans and activities accomplished.
- Establish technical working group 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 within the delivery of human services transportation.

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## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q2 2025 – Q2 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$100,000	\$40,000

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# REGIONAL MICROTRANSIT POLICY FRAMEWORK

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

The region is experiencing growth in a relatively new transit service model known as microtransit. This service is typically on-demand, with individualized scheduling, smaller vehicles, and short trips. All the transit providers in the region are operating some form of microtransit but there are inconsistencies between how the services are offered to customers, managed by providers, and coordinated between different service types. **This consultant study will assess the state of microtransit in the region, assess national best practices for microtransit operations and coordination across providers, and make recommendations for areas where regional microtransit policies are needed and what those regional policies should be.**

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Create a technical advisory team of microtransit providers to guide the results of the work.
- Assess and document the microtransit programs in the region including their policies, strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results.
- Conduct a peer review of similar microtransit programs, including those where different providers operate in the same region, and best practice literature.
- Develop a policy framework for microtransit operations in the region.

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## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026 ☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q1 2025 – Q1 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$100,000	\$10,000

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# REGIONAL SIDEWALK DATASET STUDY, PHASE 1 & 2

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

While the region has a wide range of data available about roads, less is available for pedestrian facilities on the regional scale. Individual agencies may have data about the location of sidewalks with varying degrees of detail, but this is not consistently available in common formats across the region. **This lack of data creates challenges when planning for walking and rolling. Earlier Council internal work determined that the best course of action would be to create a regional dataset rather than trying to compile existing data from communities and filling in gaps.** This work builds on the previous Council assessment and pilot and is envisioned to be done in two phases. Phase 1 would be a consultant study to assist the Council with reviewing the internal work done in 2018 and 2019, convening external and internal stakeholders to prioritize data needs, and reviewing best options available for addressing these data needs. Phase I will largely conclude in 2025. Phase 2 will entail selecting an option(s) to acquire, purchase, or collect the sidewalk data, along with identification of funding for the recommended path.

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Create a technical advisory group of external and internal stakeholders to guide the work.
- Implement recommendations for Phase 2 regional sidewalk data collection.
- Review quality of data and prepare for availability for internal and external partners.

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## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026 ☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q1 2025 – Q3 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
TBD Based on Phase I	\$10,000

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# SAFER CONNECTIONS TO TRANSIT STUDY

## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

The [Regional Pedestrian Safety Action Plan](#) identified that significant percentages of pedestrian crashes happen near transit stops or stations, although this does not mean that transit is causing these crashes. While these locations are common destinations for pedestrians, they are also proxies for where more people are likely to be walking. **To help reduce the numbers of pedestrians who are killed or seriously injured in the region, 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, such as stop spacing, crossing enhancements for mid-block stops, pedestrian countermeasures, etc.** This study will develop a methodology to identify locations where improvements are needed and identify strategies to address these needs. It will build on related work from MnDOT and other partner agencies. This study may also engage transit riders and residents living near transit to collect information on the barriers that are challenging for safely accessing transit services by walking, rolling, or biking to stops or stations.

## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Review literature and best practices for transit and roadway design elements affecting pedestrian safety.
- 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.

## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026 ☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q2 2025 – Q3 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$200,000	\$150,000

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# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT & ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

This guide will draw on existing community engagement guidance work like the Federal Highway Administration's Community Impact Assessment: A Quick Reference Guide and other resources, to develop a project-level guide for our region. This guide will provide guidance on identifying and defining community, methods for mapping community assets and context, methods for engaging with communities about their transportation needs, and integrating those findings into a project's purpose and need, planning, development, and decision-making. Community assets include, but are not limited to, demographic characteristics of people; past or ongoing transportation policies or investments that have benefited or harmed the community; the physical environment such as current transportation barriers or access; physical assets such as adjacent bodies of water and recreational assets such as parks and trails; and social and cultural assets such as community centers, schools, religious centers, employment and local businesses; and other data.

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Review and summarize relevant local, regional, state and federal work related to methodologies for identifying community assets and transportation needs and data sources.
- Engage community members and partner staff and policy makers at key points to develop this guide.
- Develop and publish a regional guide on community asset mapping and community engagement to provide assistance with developing transportation projects.

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## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q3 2025 – Q4 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$175,000	\$140,000

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# FRAMEWORK FOR ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC HEALTH DESTINATIONS

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

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 the major categories of important destinations, produce data for the region, and identify an update schedule to keep this data current.

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- 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.
- Identify schedule and cost for keeping data current.

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## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q3 2025 – Q3 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$100,000	\$70,000

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# TRAVEL FORECASTING MODEL UPDATES

## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

Staff will continue to improve the ActivitySim travel forecasting model in 2026, building off the previously completed Phase I and Phase II implementation projects to begin using it internally and with regional partners. **There are three consultant projects that will occur or begin in 2026 to continue to enhance the ActivitySim model: Regional Model Roadway Network Speed Update; Network Wrangler Update; and Freight Model Update.**

## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- *Regional Model Roadway Network Speed Update.* This project will help the Council better forecast how demographic and transportation policies affect system performance and traveler's experiences. Currently, free-flow and congested roadway link speeds are a function of roadway classification indices, land use area types, and volume-delay functions. This project will update how the model calculates speed by identifying and preparing road network speed data to update model inputs and provide validation datasets; providing a peer review on methodologies to calculate congested speeds; evaluating different methods, classifications, or functions available for calculating congested and uncongested speeds like roadway classifications, area types, volume-delay functions; implementing, testing, and validating new methods based on observed speed data; and updating cost functions used to assign vehicle traffic to EZ-Pass lanes based on observed usage data.
- *Network Wrangler Update.* From 2018-2024, the Council implemented the open-source software "Network Wrangler" to manage and implement changes to the model's highway network. This software is now operational, but minor enhancements and bug fixes will require a small on-call contract.
- *Freight Model Update.* The freight model underlying the current regional model needs modernization. In mid-2026, the Council will begin a multi-year project to improve ActivitySim's freight model, incorporating best practices and address findings from the 2023 Urban Freight Distribution Study.

## Schedule & Budget

☐ Project Initiated Before 2026

☒ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q1 2026 – Q4 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$185,000	\$185,000

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# TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH PROGRAM

## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

The Council partners in several ways with the University of Minnesota, both participating in cooperative research and sponsoring research directly. Part of this project was formerly titled the Transitway Impact Research Program but has now been broadened to address transit research generally. This research may be funded by multiple grants.

## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- *Transit Impact Research Program* will fund a portion of a transit research project to be selected in early 2025 by the funding partners of the program at the UMN. This is an activity the Council participates in on an annual basis. (The 2026 budget for this part of the project is \$25,000.)
- *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. (The 2026 budget for this part of the project is \$20,000.)
- *Transportation 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. The initial focus areas will be sustainability in transportation and climate change impacts. CTS and agencies who contribute funding will select projects for funding and UMN researchers will complete the work. CTS and MnDOT have committed funding to launch the program and are seeking additional funding partners to support the program. After a 3-year pilot period, program sponsors will evaluate how successful the program has been in addressing short-term emerging research needs and determine if it should continue. (The 2026 budget for this part of the project is \$55,000.)

## Schedule & Budget

☐ Project Initiated Before 2026

☒ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q1 2026 – Q4 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$100,000	\$100,000

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# EVALUATION OF FORECAST ACCURACY & ROBUSTNESS

## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

Several recent corridor studies and projects have demonstrated that regional traffic growth over the past two decades is inconsistent with past highway forecasts and current future forecasts with contemporary models. **An examination is needed to identify the accuracy of previous forecasts, reasons for inaccuracies, and to develop recommendations to improve current forecasting practice.**

## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Review past corridor-level highway forecasts in the region from 2000 to 2020.
- Conduct an analysis of overall accuracy and the causes of any inaccuracies.
- Review current forecasting practices and make recommendations for improvement.

## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q4 2024 – Q1 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$100,000	\$10,000

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# CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROCESS PILOT CORRIDOR ANALYSIS

## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

This study will assess the guidance outlined within the CMP Corridor Analysis Handbook completed in 2022 and pilot a number of corridor analyses to demonstrate and refine how the handbook applies to corridors within various land use and locational contexts. This analysis will help determine if any changes are necessary to the handbook and serve as a means to more thoroughly implement the CMP Handbook in the regional planning process and identify corridor level investments. This work will ultimately contribute by ensuring consistency between congestion mitigation strategies and the 2050 TPP.

## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- 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.

## Schedule & Budget

☒ Project Initiated Before 2026

☐ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q4 2024 – Q3 2026

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$150,000	\$100,000

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# MANAGED LANE SYSTEM STUDY, PHASE 4

## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

Managed lanes aim to provide more reliable trip times, along with transit and carpool advantages on corridors experiencing reliability issues. These advantages equate to fewer vehicles on the road carrying the same amount of people, serving also to assist in reducing excessive delay during peak periods. **The Met Council, in partnership with MnDOT, will update the MnPASS (now E-ZPass) System Study Phase 3, published in 2017 to identify priority areas for future E-ZPass lane investments.**

## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Conduct a peer review to understand how other metropolitan areas are planning for managed lane investments, including converting existing general purpose lanes to managed lanes.
- Perform a before and after analysis at managed lane locations within the region to understand the positive and negative effects of building managed lanes in the region over the past 20 years.
- Evaluate the highway system to identify where managed lane investments would be most impactful, considering factors like unreliable vehicle and transit travel times, greenhouse gas reduction, safety, and affordability.
- Develop a potential implementation framework with prioritized locations that coordinate with identified investments in the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan.
- Draft updates to the 2050 TPP resulting from the study findings.

## Schedule & Budget

☐ Project Initiated Before 2026 ☒ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q1 2026 – Q4 2027

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$250,000	\$125,000

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# EXISTING INTERCHANGE MODERNIZATION STUDY

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

This study will prioritize improvements on existing interchanges based on infrastructure condition; presence of bicycle, pedestrian, and transit elements; and mobility, resiliency, freight, safety, and other factors. The study process will include close coordination with cities and counties who often own the cross-street at an existing interchange. This study will not analyze freeway to freeway connections as these were already assessed in the Freeway System Interchange Study (2020).

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Perform an existing conditions system analysis to identify infrastructure condition, multimodal elements, safety, mobility, or other factors to identify planning level needs at existing interchanges in the region.
- Engage with city and county stakeholders and the public to identify important factors for consideration in analysis and prioritization.
- Conduct a regional project process review to understand how, when, and where local governments are making investments in this project type.
- Develop a prioritized list of interchanges for investment. Work with local agency partners to sketch planning level concepts that address deficiencies at a small number of high priority locations.
- Propose funding sources that could be used/pursued for these types of investment, including any potential changes to the Regional Solicitation scoring measures.

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## Schedule & Budget

☐ Project Initiated Before 2026 ☒ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q3 2026 – Q2 2028

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$700,000	\$50,000

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# COMPLETE STREETS LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provides increased design flexibility in federal-aid roadway projects. **This work will provide partners with guidance on using this flexibility, particularly adapting roadway design to different land use contexts or as a tool to guide desired land uses.** The project may provide partners implementation guidance on common Complete Streets project elements, recommend actions for prioritizing projects with Complete Streets elements in selection processes, and provide a land use and traveler-sensitive supplement to functional classification. This project will build upon existing guidance like the Federal Highway Administration's Complete Streets Transformations scenarios, Minnesota Department of Transportation's Complete Streets Handbook, National Association of City Transportation Officials' Urban Street Design Guide, and similar work by peer metropolitan planning organizations. This guide may be supported with assistance and workshops to support implementation.

## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- A street typology, informed by land use community designations and road function, with paired design guidance.
- Recommended actions for implementing Complete Streets principles in project selection processes.
- Guidance for coordinating livability improvements (e.g., economic development, placemaking) with roadway projects.
- Stakeholder engagement and training with implementing partners and other interested groups.

## Schedule & Budget

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Project Initiated Before 2026

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Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** 4 2027

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$350,000	\$175,000

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# 2050 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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## Project Overview

### UPWP Task:

This project will develop technical assistance materials to support cities, townships, and counties in developing their comprehensive plan updates to meet or be consistent with the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan. This technical assistance will include materials like policy fact sheets, guides, workshops or training videos, technical resources like spreadsheet tools, and other support. The Council is working with local partners to identify the specific topics that will benefit from technical assistance and Council staff will then assess which topics need consultant support. This effort may be funded through multiple contracts, depending on identified topics.

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## Key Tasks & Deliverables

- Assess the technical assistance needs and determine which are high priority that will require consultant support.
- Hire consultant(s) to develop roughly three to six technical assistance materials based on prioritized list.

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## Schedule & Budget

☐ Project Initiated Before 2026

☒ Project to be Initiated in 2026

**Estimated Project Dates:** Q1 2026 – Q1 2027

Estimated Total Budget	Estimated 2026 Budget
\$100,000	\$75,000

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