

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: October 28, 2012

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of November 13, 2013

Subject: Concur with TAB Action to Evaluate Regional Solicitation Projects Using Modal Evaluation Categories and Defining Eligibility

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: TAB Regional Solicitation

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Division/Department: Metropolitan Transportation Services

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council concur with the TAB action to evaluate Regional Solicitation projects using modal evaluation categories and defining project eligibility by mode as shown on the attached tables.

Background

In previous regional solicitations, projects were submitted for evaluation under specific funding programs. Most roadway projects were funded with Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds, except system management projects which were funded with Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds.

Independent bicycle and pedestrian projects were previously funded either through the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program or through the STP Bikeways/Walkways sub-category. Transit and travel demand management (TDM) projects were funded with CMAQ funds.

Evaluating projects based upon funding categories sometimes resulted in projects being eligible to submit for funding under more than one category (e.g., currently a trail project could be submitted in STP Bikeways/Walkways or TE) and also focused project evaluation on the funding program eligibility rather than on regional priorities for investment (i.e. CMAQ criteria focused on projects with highest air quality benefits rather than on the highest regional transit expansion priorities).

A modal approach to project evaluation has the following advantages:

1. It simplifies and streamlines the process (a major evaluation objective), so that projects do not need to be submitted in different categories.
2. It is less confusing for first-time applicants.
3. It provides flexibility to match funding to the highest performing projects that are submitted.

Therefore, the TAB recommended that projects be submitted and evaluated based on mode rather than on funding program. Modal categories proposed include the following:

- Roadways, including multimodal elements
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities
- Transit and TDM Projects

In addition to recommending that projects submitted through the Regional Solicitation be evaluated by mode, the TAB recommended that eligibility for projects within each modal category be adopted as shown in attached Tables 1, 2 and 3, and that projects which do not fall within these modal eligibility tables, as shown in Table 4 (attached), not be recommended for funding through the competitive solicitation process. Project types as shown in Table 4 do not fit well within a competitive process but are eligible for federal funding and may meet identified regional investment criteria. It is recommended that these projects types still be eligible to request funding directly from the TAB. A decision on whether or not to fund these projects through a non-competitive process should be made prior to each Regional Solicitation.

Rationale

TAB develops and issues a Regional Solicitation for federal funding. This recommended motion will provide policy direction on the design of the solicitation.

Funding

No funding impact.

Known Support / Opposition

Action supported by TAB. No known opposition.

Regional Solicitation Evaluation: Modal Category Eligibility – Revised October 10, 2013

The Steering Committee recommends eligibility within each modal category as shown in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1: Types of Roadway Projects Eligible for the Roadways (Including Multi-Modal Elements) Category

Project Type	Supporting Documentation
A" Minor Arterials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance detailed in "A" Minor Arterial System Evaluation, including the recommendation to continue funding them as part of the Regional Solicitation. • The need for funding this system was stressed by stakeholders. • Emphasize multimodal project components as desired by stakeholders.
Non-Freeway Principal Arterials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects funded are a high priority for local agencies. • MAP-21 performance measures for the NHS system will likely prioritize MnDOT state funding on the freeway system making the Solicitation an even more important funding source for Non-Freeway Principal Arterial projects.
Roadway System Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance stressed in 2030 TPP. • Provides high congestion mitigation and air quality improvement benefits. • Beyond signal timing and other activities eligible in the past, expand eligibility/write criteria making it possible for the system management components of managed lanes projects to be competitive.
Bridges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Bridge Improvement/Replacement funding was eliminated as part of MAP-21. • Bridge projects will be funded as part of "A" Minor Arterial and Non-Freeway Principal Arterial projects. • There is high demand for bridge funding, but limited funding sources for bridges, especially along city and county-owned roadways. • Overpasses and Interchanges were funded previously as part of "A" Minor Arterial and Non-Freeway Principal Arterial projects, but prioritizing criteria may need to be adjusted to better accommodate bridge projects.

Regional Solicitation Evaluation: Modal Category Eligibility – Revised October 10, 2013

Table 2: Types of Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects Eligible for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Category

Project Type	Supporting Documentation
Independent Bike and Pedestrian Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance stressed by stakeholder input, particularly for bike/pedestrian facilities that remove gaps, connect to key regional facilities, or serve a regional purpose. • On-street bike lanes and sidewalks built separately from a roadway project would be considered “independent” bike/pedestrian projects, as well as multimodal off-road trails.
Pedestrian Realm, Streetscaping/Landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian realm (streetscaping and/or landscaping) improvements are an important part of pedestrian improvements. • In past Solicitations, streetscaping was the second most applied for TE sub-category after bike/pedestrian facilities.
ADA Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADA improvements are stressed as part of MAP-21. • There are limited funding sources for ADA improvement projects.
Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MnDOT guidance targets 15 percent of TAP funds allocated by MnDOT for Safe Routes to School projects.

Regional Solicitation Evaluation: Modal Category Eligibility – Revised October 10, 2013

Table 3: Types of Transit and TDM Projects Eligible in Transit and TDM Category

Project Type	Supporting Documentation
Transit Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit is an important component of the 2030 TPP. • Beyond new buses (includes diesel, clean diesel, hybrid, and alternative fuel types), transit parking spaces, and other activities eligible in the past, expand eligibility/write criteria making it possible for the transit components of managed lanes and Arterial BRT projects to be competitive.
Transit Start-Up Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some start-up operating expenses have been funded in the past and should continue to be eligible in the future.
TDM Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance stressed in 2030 TPP. • Stakeholders encouraged the inclusion of TDM projects in future Regional Solicitations. • Eligible activities may include bike sharing, carsharing, telecommuting, and other similar activities. • A current solicitation is underway for innovative TDM projects.
Transit System Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance stressed in 2030 TPP. • Provides high congestion mitigation and air quality improvement benefits. • Beyond signal timing and other activities eligible in the past, expand eligibility/write criteria making it possible for the system management components of Arterial BRT projects to be competitive.

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Table 4: Other Federally-Eligible Projects not Recommended for Competitive Evaluation, but can be Funded through the TAB

Project Type	Supporting Documentation
TMOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to fund TMOs and Metro Transit base-level TDM activities outside the competitive process because it is difficult to differentiate between them. • Prior to each Regional Solicitation, the TAB should determine if the TMOs will continue to be funded. It is assumed that these dollars would be taken from Transit and TDM project funds. • Stakeholders noted the value of TMOs to the region.
Other Federally-Eligible STP, TAP, and CMAQ Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants with unique federally-eligible projects that cannot be easily compared to other projects as part of the Regional Solicitation can still request funding through the TAB. • TAB is encouraged to make a determination on funding any unique projects before each Regional Solicitation begins. • Clearly defining Regional Solicitation eligibility will be helpful to applicants in determining whether to submit a project. • Streamlines the Regional Solicitation to focus limited funds on the highest priorities and makes it easier to compare similar project types.