

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: February 25, 2019

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of February 27, 2019

Subject: Public Comment Report and Amendment to the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan to Add Riverview Modern Streetcar Locally Preferred Alternative

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statutes Sec. 473.175 and 473.176; FAST Act

Staff Prepared/Presented: Nick Thompson, Director MTS, 651-602-1754

Amy Vennewitz, Deputy Director MTS, 651-602-1058

Cole Hiniker, Multimodal Transportation Planning Manager, 651-602-1748

Michelle Fure, Public Involvement Manager, 651-602-1545

Sara Maaske, Senior Communications Specialist, 651-602-1588

Division/Department: Transportation/MTS

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Accept the Public Comment Report for the proposed amendment to the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan to add Riverview Modern Streetcar Locally Preferred Alternative;
2. Direct the Regional Administrator to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Ramsey County and Hennepin County regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Council and the Counties during the continuing environmental analysis and pre-project development phases of the Riverview project, including continued consultation with the tribal governments and communities; and
3. Adopt an amendment to the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan to add the Riverview Modern Streetcar locally preferred alternative to the Transportation Policy Plan's Current Revenue Scenario.

Background

Under federal transportation planning law, the Council is required to develop a long-range transportation plan that is updated at least every four years. The plan must be multimodal and identify transportation system goals and investment priorities over at least a 20-year period. The plan is required to identify regionally significant transportation investments that will be implemented within the timeframe of the plan, and maintains fiscal balance between anticipated project costs and funding. The current 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) was adopted on October 24, 2018.

The 2040 TPP includes a fiscally constrained list of major projects for investment in the region by 2040, known as the Current Revenue Scenario. All fixed-guideway rail transit projects are considered major projects under federal guidance. These projects must be identified as funded in a region's long-range transportation plan, in order to qualify for Federal Transit Administration capital investment grants. Transitway projects generally originate as locally led projects to recommend a locally preferred alternative (LPA) for adoption. This amendment

adds the Riverview Modern Streetcar LPA to the TPP's Current Revenue Scenario at the request of Ramsey County. Attachment 1 contains the amendment text that will be posted on the Council TPP website as an addition to the full plan. The attached text also references the project website, hosted by Ramsey County, and some basic information about the Riverview Modern Streetcar LPA.

The Council released the proposed amendment for public comment on November 29, 2018, held a public hearing on January 9, 2019 and closed the public comment period on January 21, 2019. The Council promoted the public comment period through the website, email distribution lists, social media and an advertisement in the Star Tribune.

As shown in the attached Public Comment Report, over 80 individuals and organizations submitted nearly 90 unique comments on the proposed amendment through mail, email, letters and public hearing testimony.

Tribal outreach also began informally through existing staff relationships during the public comment period. That outreach resulted in four meetings and one tribal consultation. Staff meetings included MnDOT tribal relations staff; Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and the Lower Sioux Community; Upper Sioux Community; and the Programs and Dakota Outreach Manager with the Minnesota Historical Society's Native American Initiatives. A tribal consultation was held with the Prairie Island Indian Community.

Given the following:

1. Comments and concerns raised during the public comment process about environmental, cultural and historical impacts of the route that will require exploration and resolution during the continuing pre-project development and environmental project phases;
2. The on-going need for consultation with the state's tribal governments; and
3. That the Council will become the lead agency when the project enters project development, engineering and construction phases and will be the owner/operator of the Riverview modern streetcar project

The Council determined there was a need to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council, Ramsey and Hennepin counties clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each during the on-going and future phases of the project.

Rationale

Transitway projects can be added to the fiscally constrained Transportation Policy Plan when the following criteria are met:

- A locally preferred alternative (LPA) designating the mode and alignment is identified and adopted by a lead agency and the LPA report is submitted to the Council documenting the planning process including a summary of the project's public input process and content
- Local affected governments adopt resolutions of support for the LPA, validating their support for the project moving forward
- A reasonable project timeline is submitted with key milestones for federal action and construction and opening dates for the project
- A reasonable financial plan is submitted documenting how the project can be built and operated with revenues in the fiscally constrained plan (or reasonable proposed additional revenues)

Ramsey County provided the appropriate information to meet these criteria above for the Riverview Modern Streetcar LPA. A public comment period and public hearing were held indicating general support for the project but also a continued need for consultation with the tribal governments.

Thrive Lens Analysis

The draft 2040 TPP amendment addresses all of the *Thrive MSP 2040* outcomes and principles as part of the broader Plan's six transportation system goals and their corresponding objectives and strategies. The text specifically discusses how the amendment supports the goals of Access to Destinations, Competitive Economy, and Land Use and Local Planning through strategies and any associated performance measures that are impacted by the added project. These impacts are strongly aligned with the Thrive outcomes of Prosperity and Livability. The text also specifically discusses impacts to transportation finance, equity, and the environment, supporting the Thrive outcomes of Stewardship, Equity, and Sustainability.

Funding

The action does not directly require or involve funding. However, under federal law, regionally significant transportation projects and the expected funding for the projects must be identified in the fiscally constrained long-range plan before being eligible for federal funding and included in the region's Transportation Improvement Program. There is a discussion on the impacts on transportation finance in the amendment text.

Known Support / Opposition

The project is supported by Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul as documented in the resolutions of support passed by these entities. Comments received from other organizations and individuals are shown in the attached public comment report. Public comments produced the following themes:

- A majority of the comments support transit investment in the corridor but would prefer Arterial Bus Rapid Transit.
- Many of the comments expressed concerns about the significant cost of adding modern streetcar in this corridor.
- Several of the comments preferred a different alignment of the corridor that includes connection to the Ford Site redevelopment in Saint Paul.
- Several comments expressed concerns about the impacts to areas of cultural significance, wildlife and Fort Snelling.
- A few comments supported immediate investment in the existing service, Route 54 local bus service.