

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: January 13, 2020

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of January 22, 2020

Subject: Release of the 2020 Regional Solicitation for Transportation Projects

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: TAB Action

Staff Prepared/Presented: Amy Vennewitz, Deputy Director, Finance & Planning (651-602-1508)
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Division/Department: Transportation / Metropolitan Transportation Services

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council concur with the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) action to approve the attached Regional Solicitation package, including the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Solicitation for 2024-2025 funding (2022-2023 funding for TDM projects) and to release the solicitation.

Background

The Regional Solicitation for federal transportation project funding is part of the Metropolitan Council's federally required continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The Twin Cities Metropolitan Area selects projects for funding from two federal programs, the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program. Following the previous Regional Solicitation, Council staff worked with applicants, scorers, the Technical Advisory Committee, and TAB to update the Regional Solicitation.

The attached Regional Solicitation includes the 11 applications, criteria, and associated weightings for the updated Regional Solicitation. TAB received a dozen comments during its recent public comment period. These comments came from five cities (Apple Valley, Minneapolis, Burnsville, Eagan, and Cottage Grove), four counties (Carver, Scott, Washington, and Anoka), Minnesota Valley Transit Association, East Metro Strong, and Metro Transit. Several changes were made to the application package based on the public comments received.

The Solicitation application period is expected to last from mid-February 2020 to mid-April 2020, with TAB action to select projects in late 2020.

Also included is the HSIP Solicitation. This solicitation funds smaller safety-focused projects and is administered by the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Rationale

TAB develops and issues a Regional Solicitation for federal funding that is intended to implement regional policy and address regional and local transportation needs. The Council concurs with TAB actions regarding the Regional Solicitation.

Thrive Lens Analysis

This action promotes all outcomes highlighted in Thrive MSP 2040, as the scoring criteria and measures are derivative of that plan. Examples include the

cost effectiveness measure (stewardship), the equity measure (equity), safety measures (livability), usage measures (prosperity), and air quality measures (sustainability).

Funding

The 2020 Regional Solicitation will be funded with approximately \$180 million in federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program funds. Local sponsors match the federal funds at a minimum of 20 percent. The 2020 HSIP Solicitation will be funded with up to \$24 million in federal Highway Safety Improvement Program funds and requires a local match of at least 10 percent.

Known Support / Opposition

No known opposition.

Summary of Regional Solicitation Comments Received

1. Minnesota Valley Transit Association (MVTA) – 6 comments
2. The City of Apple Valley – 5 comments
3. Carver County – 4 comments
4. Scott County – 8 comments
5. Washington County – 3 comments
6. East Metro Strong – 4 comments
7. Metro Transit – 3 comments
8. The City of Minneapolis – 9 comments
9. The City of Burnsville – 4 comments
10. Anoka County – 4 comments
11. City of Eagan – 5 comments
12. City of Cottage Grove – 12 comments

Comments Related to Modal Funding Ranges and Unique Project Funding

Comment	Comment Summary	Commenter
1	Increase roadway modal category by \$4 million and the bicycle/pedestrian modal category by \$1 million, bringing them back to their traditional proportions.	2, 3, 4, 10
2	Support the proposed additional regional funding to transit, whether through an increase to the modal funding range of transit projects or by over-programming across all modes.	1, 2, 11
3	Eliminate the proposed 2.5% set-aside for the Unique Projects category.	3
4	Supports the creation of the Unique Projects category.	2, 7
5	Redirect the \$5 million proposed for Unique projects to restore roadway and bike/pedestrian amounts; then backfill Unique projects as additional funds become available.	2
6	Recommend that highways receive a minimum of 60% of available funding, consistent with historical levels.	4

Comments Related to Minimum and Maximum Awards

Comment	Comment Summary	Commenter
7	The proposed adjustments to the minimum and maximum project awards will have a positive impact.	10, 12
8	The increase to the \$10 M for Roadway Expansion is inconsistent with the other categories – all categories are experiencing inflation.	8
9	One or more projects should be eligible for a \$5.5 million max in the multiuse trail application category.	2, 8
10	Support a \$10 M million maximum for bridge projects.	4

Comment Related to Bridge Funding Category Minimum

Comment	Comment Summary	Commenter
11	Support keeping the \$10 million minimum set-aside for the Bridge application category	4

Comments Related to Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Program and Transit New Market Guarantee

Comment	Comment Summary	Commenter
12	The creation of a new category specifically for Arterial Bus Rapid Transit precludes other agencies to compete for these funds. Support a broader interpretation of Bus Rapid Transit, which would allow multiple agencies to compete in this new category.	1, 4, 5, 9, 11
13	Supports the proposed Arterial BRT category.	6, 7, 8, 12
14	The proposed \$25 million maximum for Arterial BRT projects and up to \$7 million for an additional BRT project selected through Transit Expansion of Transit Modernization categories leaves little funding for fixed route services.	1, 9, 11, 12
15	The addition of the Arterial BRT category will reduce funding in other modal categories and limit the ability to improve the A-minor arterial roadway system, which is the primary system used by buses.	4, 10
16	Support creation of a Transit New Market guarantee.	1, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12
17	If broader BRT is not feasible, award at least one project in Transit Expansion and at least one project in Transit Modernization to a Suburban Transit Association provider.	1, 4, 11
18	Support limiting BRT funding to ensure other transit projects can still be funded.	12

Comment Related to Long-Term Transit Operations

Comment	Comment Summary	Commenter
19	Reinstate the requirement that transit applicants must demonstrate financial capacity to operate projects beyond the life of awarded projects.	1, 9

Comments Related to Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities Measures

Comment	Comment Summary	Commenter
20	Revise the new bonus point scoring added to criterion 4A (Deficiencies and Safety). Remove Part 2 scoring and bonus point option.	3
21	Revise and redistribute the 50 additional points proposed for criterion 2A Potential Usage to other measures. This measure of population and employment within 1-mile does not accurately capture facility usage in rural or rural center communities or for bicycle and pedestrian facilities that serve as the primary connection between communities.	3
22	Develop a process to update the RBTN map.	5, 6
23	Give multiuse trails that connect to an existing or future transitway station the full 200 points in the RBTN criteria.	5,6

Comments Related to Roadways and Spot Mobility Categories and Measures

Comment	Comment Summary	Commenter
24	The Spot Mobility category will be beneficial in allocating funding to small improvement projects that will provide significant value at lower costs	10
25	Support new emphasis given to pedestrian safety. However, 41% of scoring is still related to existing congestion and mitigation, which may counteract potential safety improvements.	6, 8
26	Safety scores based on travel speeds is counter-intuitive and has inverse relationship with crash severity and lacks context sensitivity with new state law allowing cities to set speed limits.	8
27	Consider the addition of negative points for projects that negatively impact non-motorized travel.	8
28	Scoring should be based upon new/improved pedestrian facilities, not for upgrading facilities to ADA standards.	8
29	Measures A and B in the roadway modernization/reconstruction category should both use daily person throughput	8
30	The measures have a continued focus on congestion, vehicle mobility, capacity expansion and highway investment which is counter to regional policy, climate change and greenhouse gas reduction.	8
31	There is a new roadway measure for pedestrian safety, however, most of the measures and points continue to emphasize travel time and congestion displacement.	8

General Comments

Comment	Comment Summary	Commenter
32	<p>Completed Council-led studies are used in the scoring criteria, but the results of these studies, in particular the maps, are often out-of-date. With no process to update these maps and rankings to reflect changing demographics, potential projects are unable to be considered for funding.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add an option to allocate points for projects that meet the intent of the study map or used in the scoring criteria, specifically: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Give the at-grade intersection with the highest traffic volumes on Highway 36 the full 80 points from the PAICS and b. Roadways with a heavy commercial vehicle volume of 1,000 should receive the full 80 points from the Truck Freight Corridor study map. 2. Develop a process to update maps and investment rankings prior to each future regional solicitation, specifically including the RBTN map, Principal Arterial Intersection Conversion Study rankings, and Truck Freight Corridor Study map 	5
33	Support inclusion of the Bike Barriers Study results into the scoring	6
34	The 2020 Regional Solicitation process circumvented the role of technical committees.	4, 5
35	Support the required completion of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition plans.	12