

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: July 26, 2021

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of August 11, 2021

Subject:	METRO Purple Line BRT Ramsey County Project Development Capital Grant Agreement
District(s), Member(s):	District 11 (Vento), District 13 (Lee), District 14 (Fredson)
Policy/Legal Reference:	Policy FM 15-1 Income/Grants, FM 14-1 Procurement
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Charles Carlson, Director, BRT Projects, 612-349-7639 Craig Lamothe, Project Director, Purple Line, 763-258-3361
Division/Department:	Metro Transit / BRT Projects

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council (“Council”) authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute the Capital Grant Agreement #211040 for Project Development with Ramsey County (“County”) and Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (“Regional Railroad Authority”) for the METRO Purple Line (formerly Rush Line) Bus Rapid Transit Project (“Project”) in an amount not to exceed \$39,900,000.

Background

The proposed agreement will fund advancement of the Project within the federal Project Development phase anticipated from late 2021 through 2023 including design, right-of-way purchase, and related project management services.

Over the last three plus years, the County, in coordination with the Council and the Minnesota Department of Transportation, has advanced the Project’s engineering and design to approximately 25 percent and, in coordination with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), completed and published an Environmental Assessment document for public review and comment. FTA is expected to issue an environmental decision on the project in fall 2021.

The Project is anticipated to be granted entry into the Project Development Phase of the Capital Investment Grant Program as a New Starts project by the FTA in summer/fall 2021. In its request to FTA, the Council must demonstrate funding has been committed for the Project Development Phase.

Entry into the federal program will allow actions critical to the continued advancement of the Project to be taken, including the awarding of consultant services contracts, establishment of a project office, and activation of agency staff resources.

Rationale

Council Policy requires that interagency agreements valued at greater than \$500,000 be approved by the Council. The Capital Grant Agreement establishes a framework for the partnership between the County, Regional Railroad Authority and the Council for delivering the Project. The proposed Capital Grant Agreement with the County and Regional Railroad Authority will make funds available for Project Development Phase activities.

Thrive Lens Analysis

Investment in high-quality transportation options will advance the Thrive outcome of prosperity, by making the region more economically competitive through

increased workers' access to employment, and support to employers by increasing available workforce with affordable, convenient transportation.

The Project advances the Equity outcome by distributing transit resources throughout the region, benefitting regional residents and increasing transit service quality. More than half of the corridor population identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC). There are approximately 18,000 zero car households in the corridor and nearly 20 percent of households living below the poverty level. Increased access to financial opportunities, educational opportunities, and health services are a key outcome of implementing the Project, advancing the Thrive outcome of livability.

By laying the foundation for a productive partnership between agencies, this agreement with the County will increase the Council's ability to carry out its principle of working collaboratively.

Funding

The proposed action will authorize the execution of agreement 21II040 to make available approximately \$39.9 million in committed funding from the County and Regional Railroad Authority to the Council for the Project.

The Council is anticipated to authorize expenditure of these funds through an upcoming amendment to the Council's Authorized Capital Program. Upon execution of the proposed agreement and upon capital program authorization, the Project's Project Development Phase will be fully authorized at approximately \$39.9 million.

Known Support / Opposition

There is no known opposition to the execution of the Capital Grant Agreement. In August 2021, the County and Regional Railroad Authority are anticipated to take board actions to commit their respective portions of the Project Development Phase funding for the Project and authorize the Capital Grant Agreement.