

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: July 26, 2021

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of August 11, 2021

Subject:	METRO Purple Line Cooperation Agreement with Minnesota Department of Transportation
District(s), Member(s):	District 11 (Vento), District 13 (Lee), District 14 (Fredson)
Policy/Legal Reference:	MN Statutes, Section 473.411
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 Cooperation Agreement #211037 with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) for the METRO Purple Line (formerly Rush Line) Bus Rapid Transit Project (“Project”).

Background

The proposed Cooperation Agreement provides the framework for MnDOT’s role and responsibilities associated with the overall delivery of the Project. MnDOT staff are anticipated be assigned to full and part-time roles supporting the Project.

Over the last three plus years, Ramsey County (“County”), in coordination with the Council and MnDOT, 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. 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.

An associated master funding agreement will provide the method to transfer funds for the work, and subordinate funding agreements will identify annually the requested MnDOT resources and estimated cost for those resources. These subsequent agreements are in development and will be requested for Council actions in the future.

Rationale

Execution of the Cooperation Agreement with MnDOT will provide the ability for the Council to manage the use of MnDOT’s technical and professional staff working on the Project.

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 MnDOT will increase the Council's ability to carry out its principle of working collaboratively.

Funding

There are no funding impacts associated with the requested Cooperation Agreement 21I037 authorization.

Future subordinate funding agreements would authorize expenditure of funds for project activities within the frameworks established by the Cooperation Agreement and subsequent master funding agreement.

Prior to future subordinate funding agreement authorizations, all funds committed for the Project Development phase will have been authorized through an executed capital grant agreement with the County and recognized in the Council's capital budget through a future Council action.

Known Support / Opposition

There is no known opposition to the execution of the Cooperation Agreement.