

TWIN CITIES METROPOLITAN AREA UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Public Comment Report

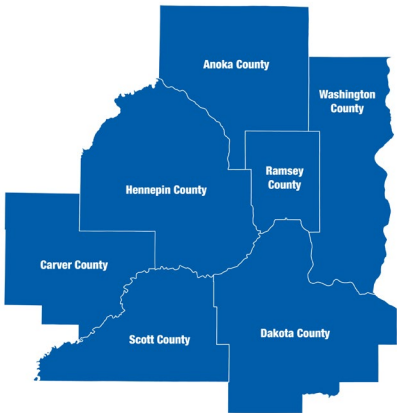


September 2021

The Council’s mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region

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The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

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Comment Overview

This comment report summarizes comments received for the Draft 2022 Twin Cities Metropolitan Area Transportation Unified Planning Work Program. The draft plan was released for public comment on August 17, 2021, and comments were accepted through September 3. During that time, the plan was available on the Metropolitan Council’s website and through printed copies as requested.

The Council proactively promoted availability of the comment draft, including advertising it and the public meeting through social media and other means.

The following report includes a spreadsheet of the comments received, the individual or agency that made the comment, the staff response to the comment, and any changes made to the Transportation Improvement Program.

We received 25 comments from four commentors.

People engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web pages – 200 unique visitors • Facebook people reached – 817 • Facebook engagement – 23 actions • Twitter engagement – 6 actions
Stakeholders involved	4
Interest groups and agencies engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carver County Public Works • City of Minneapolis Public
Methods used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web announcement and web page notice • GovDelivery email announcement • Facebook • Twitter • Star Tribune classified advertising • Public meeting
Comments received through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Mail

Key engagement themes

- Support for planning studies in the Unified Planning Work Program
- Support for continued emphasis on climate change mitigation and reducing vehicle miles traveled in our regional policies, transportation planning work and planned investments
- Support for continued emphasis on equity in our regional policies, transportation planning work and planned investments
- Specific transit operational comments to be shared with regional transit providers

Commenter Number	Commenter Name	Organization
1		Carver County Public Works
2		City of Minneapolis Public Works
3	Alex Burns	
4	Catherine Fleming	

Committer Number	Comment Topic	Comment Summary	Full Comment	Response
1.1	Supports approval of the 2022 UPWP	Carver County supports TAB approval of the 2022 UPWP	Carver County, as one of the seven counties comprising the Metropolitan Council's Metropolitan Planning Area, supports the Draft 2022 Transportation Twin Cities Metropolitan Area Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for approval by the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).	Comment and support acknowledged.
1.2	Functional Classification	Carver County requests the Council to complete a regional functional classification review of the principal arterial system.	The Functional Classification Process Update is a specific work item identified under Modal System Planning and specifically Task B-1 Highway System Planning. MnDOT recently completed a review and update to functional classification of roadways in the Metro with approval of the changes through TAC and TAB. This recent work did not include review or analysis of the highways classified as Principal Arterials. As part of the continuation of the functional classification work from 2021 into 2022, the County requests the Metropolitan Council to complete the Metro-wide functional classification review and update by including analysis of the Principal Arterial system.	The Council will soon begin the Twin Cities Functional Classification Process Update, which was included in the 2021 UPWP and will extend into 2022. This study will use the results of the recent MnDOT metro area functional classification update and provide additional guidance on the Council's role in this process. One specific task is the development of a future principal arterial functional classification map for the region to be used in the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan. Another task will include an examination of all roadways that currently are potential candidates to become principal arterials in the near-term.

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1.3	3-C Planning Process	Carver County wants to ensure that rural and rural centers are equally represented in the planning process	The County requests that all transportation planning studies conducted by the Metropolitan Council include the full MPO Planning Area boundary geography to include Rural and Rural Center areas that have historically been left out of some regional transportation planning efforts. Carver County cities of Watertown, Mayer, Norwood Young America, Cologne, and New Germany as well as rural townships are part of the MPO Planning Area and excluding these areas from transportation planning studies furthers rural transportation inequalities.	Each planning study undertaken looks at different modal and geographic issues. Where appropriate, the Council uses technical representation and input to address specific issues that are relevant to various community designations (THRIVE designations). The Council recognizes that our planning area includes both urbanized and non-urbanized areas and will work to ensure all viewpoints are incorporated in future studies.
2.1	Policy Objectives	Work products should seek to positively affect climate change, pedestrian safety, and racial disparities.	The largest overarching comment on the UPWP is that we encourage Metropolitan Council to find ways to bring policy objectives aimed at curbing climate change, reducing emissions, striving to eliminate severe and fatal pedestrian crashes, and shrinking economic and racial disparities in the region into the work products used in the region – namely, the Regional Solicitation process, the regional travel demand model, and the regional expectations around forecasting traffic growth.	This UPWP has several on-going or future planning studies specifically addressing the issues of climate change, equity, and pedestrian safety. Specifically, we will be completing a "Pedestrian Safety Action Plan" in early 2022 to identify safety strategies for implementation and are also completing "A Path to Accelerate Electric Vehicle Adoption in the Region" also in early 2022 with strategies to more quickly electric vehicle adoption. Three projects beginning soon also address these issues including the Equity Evaluation of Regional Transportation Investments: Transportation and Multimodal Climate Change Measures and the Regional Safety Study. Results from all these studies will be used within our planning processes and tools including the Regional Solicitation and travel modeling.

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2.2	Planning/Programming Processes	Mode shift in Regional Solicitation applications	Use the potential for mode shift and non-motorized counts as evaluation measures in the applications	The Council strongly agrees that there should be continued efforts to complete non-motorized counts using an agreed-upon methodology from partners across the region. Mode shift is currently used in the transit and travel demand management applications but could be further explored for other application types.
2.3	Planning/Programming Processes - Equity	Equity should be a larger factor in the Regional Solicitation project selection process	More explicitly invest and award projects to promote racial equity within the framework and project selection process	The Regional Solicitation has used Equity and Affordable Housing as a scoring criteria and measure for the last five solicitations. After each Solicitation the criteria and measures are reviewed with policymakers to implement improvements. Each cycle has resulted in improvements to the Equity and Affordable criteria. The 2022 cycle will again implement improvements to better connect the Equity and Affordable Housing scoring and encourage applicants to answer specific equity engagement questions. In addition, the new Unique Projects category will emphasize selection based upon equity measures. We anticipate these improvements will continue in future Solicitation cycles.
2.4	Modal Systems Planning - Highway	Highway systems planning work, such as the Principal Arterial Intersection Mobility Study, should consider VMT reduction	As a part of the highway systems planning work, we encourage that new studies, such as the Principal Arterial Intersection Mobility Study, consider vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reductions during the forecasting process, in line with MnDOT's preliminary goal	Thank you for your comment. The Council recognizes the importance of reducing VMT as part of reducing the region's contributions to climate change and supports including such an analysis in planning studies. In addition, the Council is undertaking a Travel Demand Management study during 2021-2022 which will identify specific strategies for implementation focused on reducing VMT and single-occupant travel. We also expect that these strategies will be a focus for the region in the updates to the 2050 Regional Development Guide and 2050 TPP.

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2.5	Modal Systems Planning	The regional Travel Demand Model should reflect a goal of reducing VMT	Though not in the work plan for 2022, we encourage Metropolitan Council to work toward updating the regional model reflective of goals around VMT reductions	The 2022 work plan includes forecast model improvement projects, both existing regional models, and of the next generation of regional models which will improve the ability to accurately forecast travel outcomes, including VMT, from different policy scenarios.
2.6	Modal Systems Planning - Freight	Support for the Urban Freight Distribution Study	In freight planning, we are glad to see the plan to initiate the Urban Freight Distribution Study to consider freight needs and opportunities to reduce regional carbon footprint related to freight.	Comment and support acknowledged.
2.7	Modal Systems Planning - Transit	Support for continued planning and implementation for transit in the Midtown Corridor.	Related to the transit planning item that identifies ongoing consultation with partners to identify regional transit planning studies that would inform investment opportunities and priorities for the regional transit system, we would like to work in partnership to advance the transit corridor along the Midtown Greenway in alignment with the LPA identified through previous planning studies and as identified in the increased revenue scenario in the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan	Comment acknowledged. City of Minneapolis staff is represented on the Transit Planning Working Group and this issue can be brought for consideration. The Midtown Corridor does have a Council adopted locally preferred alternative. Next steps would include identifying funding and a lead agency(s) to continue project development.
2.8	Modal Systems Planning	Highway planning studies should include transit alternatives to support the goals of climate change mitigation and VMT reduction.	Regional transit studies should be coordinated with the Principal Arterial Intersection Conversion Study and Congestion Management Process to identify solutions to inform funding priorities to understand the climate, GHG, and VMT reduction benefits of building out transitways instead of focusing on highway expansion.	We agree and both the Principal Arterial Intersection Mobility Study and the Congestion Management Process will include considerations of transit and multimodal options as part of the solution when analyzing corridor congestion. The region's adopted highway investment policy includes first prioritizing land-use changes, transit, TDM and multimodal investments, followed by management and spot mobility improvements, before turning to investments that expand capacity.

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2.9	Long Range Systems Planning	The TPP should thoroughly incorporate climate change and equity into the goals and objectives for the region.	We encourage special attention be brought to ways of thinking through to best incorporate climate and equity into the vision, goals and objectives of the next Transportation Policy Plan, through advanced planning on metrics like regional VMT reduction goals, GHG reduction goals, and mode shift goals.	As the UPWP acknowledges, the Council is starting the process for updating the goals, outcomes, and strategies for the 2050 Regional Development Guide and TPP updates. There will be important conversations with regional policymakers and our local government partners. In addition, 2022 UPWP has multiple studies focused on identifying strategies/actions to reduce the regional transportation system's contributions to climate change. It is anticipated that the 2050 Plans will be heavily geared towards furthering the goal of climate change reduction.
2.10	Long Range Systems Planning	Support for EJ/Equity work in the UPWP	We support the activities proposed under the Environment Justice and Equity task and are a willing partner to support this work. In particular, we look forward to the identification of regional equity metrics and evaluation measures to be used in transportation planning work and investment decision-making.	Comment and support acknowledged.
2.11	Long Range Systems Planning	Support for air quality/climate change work.	We support the efforts identified under the Air Quality and Climate Change task, in particular, those that look to set goals around GHG reductions as part of integrated transportation systems plans and investments, and how those are reflected in the TPP, TIP and Regional Solicitation Processes.	Comment and support acknowledged.
2.12	Travel Model Development/Forecasting	The TBI is used by the City of Minneapolis.	The City of Minneapolis uses the Travel Behavior Index to measure our mode share in the city – we appreciate the consistency and quality of this data set.	Comment and support acknowledged.

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2.13	Travel Model Development/Forecasting	Support for work related to COVID and travel behavior	We appreciate the work being done to understand and model the long-term impacts of covid on travel behavior – stemming from reduced travel and changing employment and school conditions.	Comment and support acknowledged.
2.14	Travel Model Development/Forecasting	The Travel Demand Model should reflect regional policy goals.	In consideration of statewide and local goals around VMT reduction, we encourage Metropolitan Council to wrestle with how to best have the regional model reflect policy goals; the model's projected growth rate is influential in so many projects developed in the region and reducing the conflict between model inputs and policy objectives will help move the region toward achieving better environmental outcomes, including greenhouse gas reductions.	The Council will continue to improve the ability of regional models and other tools to accurately forecast the effect of policies and investments on growth or decline in vehicle miles traveled.
2.15	Congestion Management Process	The region cannot build its way out of congestion	We encourage Met Council's efforts around the Congestion Management Plan and corresponding work efforts to recognize that we will not build our way out of congestion. Development of a strong transit network and safe walking and bicycle networks play a critical role in addressing regional congestion.	The CMP lists over 75 strategies to help reduce congestion along roadways, grouped into five categories: strategies to reduce vehicle miles traveled, strategies to shift automobile trips to other modes, strategies to shift trips from SOV to HOV auto/van; strategies to improve roadway operations, and finally, strategies to add capacity. The categories are tiered, and focus is strongly on reducing VMT, modal shift, and increasing transit options. Operational improvements and (especially) adding capacity are considered last-resort strategies and the Council fully agrees that the region must focus on changing travel behavior and modal shift to move people and goods in the future.

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2.16	Performance Monitoring	Support for recent work on travel trends	We support a review of recent commuting trends across 2020-21 to identify how remote work has changed typical weekday travel along major freeway to better inform investment strategies as to not focus on overbuilding an already underfunded highway system.	Comment and support acknowledged. The Council is closely following travel trends due to Covid and is also implementing a Regional Travel Demand Management study to identify how we can help continue and support the reductions in auto travel and VMT experienced during the pandemic.
2.17	Equity	Support for equity evaluation.	We look forward to seeing the results of the Equity Evaluation of Regional Transportation Investments study. We are interested having the City represented on the Policy Advisory Committee for the study if appropriate.	Comment and support acknowledged.

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3.1	Modal shift/highway expansion	The Council should focus on walking, biking, and transit in lieu of highway expansion to minimize impacts of transportation on climate change.	I am concerned about the Metropolitan Council's continued support of highway reconstruction and expansion projects at the expense of sustainable alternatives like walking, biking and transit infrastructure. The recent IPCC report has made it clear that we cannot afford to continue the status quo and that immediate and massive changes are needed to address climate change. Transportation is Minnesota's largest greenhouse gas emissions sector. Projects like I-94/252 and Rethinking I-94 have the potential to chart a new course by replacing the freeways with multi-modal boulevards that support the health and mobility of the climate and adjacent communities. I urge that the work program be amended to better account for local climate and transportation goals like Minneapolis and Saint Paul's vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction goals, as well as state goals like Minnesota's greenhouse gas reduction targets and MnDOT's 20% VMT reduction goal. We could make walking, biking and transit easy and accessible to many by shifting even a fraction of highway spending into sustainable transportation infrastructure. An "all-the-above" approach that continues to spend hundreds of millions on our state's biggest polluter is unacceptable.	Thank you for your comment. The Council recognizes the importance of increasing multimodal travel and reducing VMT as part of reducing the region's contributions to climate change. In 2021-2022, the Council is undertaking a Regional Travel Demand Management study which will identify specific strategies/actions for implementation focused on reducing VMT and single-occupant travel. In addition, we will be undertaking a study Transportation and Climate Change Multimodal Measures to adopt specific measures and targets for inclusion in regional policy. We expect that the climate change related strategies/actions and measures from our planning work will be included in the updates to the 2050 Regional Development Guide and 2050 TPP.

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4.1	Transit Expansion	Expansion of transit service during peak hours	More frequent transit service during "peak" hours. This would increase the possibility of social distancing for transit riders who may have visible and invisible signs of illness. (peak as defined by transit riders in a particular area, not necessarily corridor-wide)	This comment will be forwarded to the regional transit providers. The UPWP outlines the region's upcoming transportation planning work and products produced by the MPO, which does not include specific transit operational changes.
4.2	Transit Safety	Clean/disinfect buses more frequently	More frequent cleaning and disinfecting of trains and buses (after each peak travel) Sadly, people may cough, vomit and leave other pathogens on the train, especially if they can't afford tissues, etc.	This comment will be forwarded to the regional transit providers. The UPWP outlines the region's upcoming transportation planning work and products produced by the MPO, which does not include specific transit operational changes.
4.3	Transit service change notifications	Increase notifications of transit delays/cancellations and develop relationships with private ride solution providers	Prompt notifications and other free transit options available if there is an issue with a train, bus or the overall system. Some riders cannot miss one day of work. Met Council may need to form a relationship with Uber/Lyft, Mobility or other alternate transit options for working adults.	This comment will be forwarded to the regional transit providers. The UPWP outlines the region's upcoming transportation planning work and products produced by the MPO, which does not include specific transit operational changes.
4.4	Transit Safety	Provide a safe shelter for students	For traveling school students, there should be a safe place to wait if the train or bus is delayed.	This comment will be forwarded to the regional transit providers. The UPWP outlines the region's upcoming transportation planning work and products produced by the MPO, which does not include specific transit operational changes.



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