

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: February 28, 2022

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of March 9, 2022

Subject: Public Comment Report and Amendment #1 to the *2040 Transportation Policy Plan* to Amend in the Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Network Next System and Amend in the Six MnDOT Freight Project Selections

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statutes Sec. 473.146; Council Actions 2020-14, 2021-52, 2021-244, 2021-245; Minnesota Statewide Freight System and Investment Plan; FAST Act

Staff Prepared/Presented: Amy Vennewitz, Deputy Director MTS, 651-602-1058

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Division/Department: Transportation/MTS

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Accept the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan Amendment #1 Public Comment Report (attached) and,
2. Adopt Amendment #1 (attached) to the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan, including redlined edits proposed by staff in response to public comment, to amend in the arterial bus rapid transit Network Next system and amend in six MnDOT freight project selections

Background

Under federal transportation planning law, the Council is required to develop a long-range transportation plan that is updated at least every five 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 must maintain fiscal balance between anticipated project costs and projected available funding. The current *2040 Transportation Policy Plan* (TPP) was adopted on November 18, 2020.

The 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) includes a fiscally constrained list of major projects for investment in the region by 2040, known as the Current Revenue Scenario. All transitway projects and highway projects that add lanes or interchanges to a Principal Arterial Highway are considered regionally significant projects. These projects must be identified as funded in a region's long-range transportation plan (i.e., the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan) in order to be added to the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and then to begin construction. The attached draft 2040 Transportation Policy Plan Amendment #1 document describes the project changes in detail. Figure 1 also shows the proposed project locations.

The draft 2040 Transportation Policy Plan update was reviewed and recommended for release for public comments by the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and TAC Planning. MTS staff worked closely with the

Metro Transit BRT Projects department and MnDOT to review the requirements for a TPP amendment and to draft the necessary materials for this action.

Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Projects

Requested by Metro Transit, this amendment includes additions and extensions to the region's arterial bus rapid transit network as part of implementing its Network Next 20-year transit improvement plan. Additions to the Current Revenue Scenario include the following:

- B Line (Lake Street / Marshall Ave / Selby Ave), including the extended alignment to downtown Saint Paul
- E Line (Hennepin Ave / France Ave)
- F Line (Central Ave)
- G Line (Rice St / Robert St)

Additions or updates to the Increased Revenue Scenario include the following arterial bus rapid transit corridors:

- H Line (Como / Maryland)
- 63rd / Zane
- Grand
- Johnson / Lyndale
- Lowry
- Nicollet
- Randolph / East 7th
- West Broadway / Cedar

Subtractions from the Increased Revenue Scenario include the following:

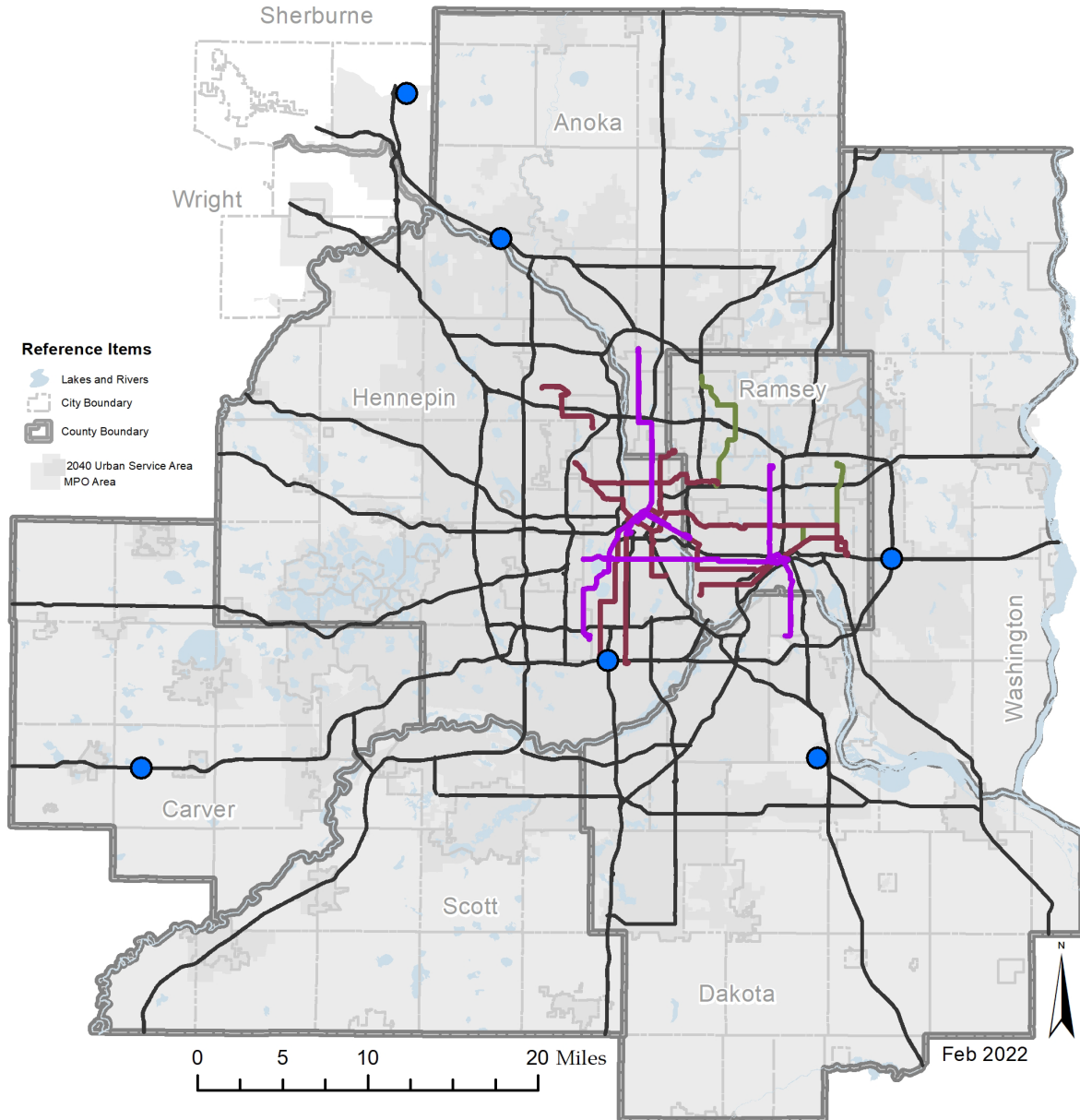
- East 7th/White Bear Avenue
- North Snelling/Lexington (A Line Extension)

MnDOT Selected Freight Projects

Requested by MnDOT and the project applicants (City of Inver Grove Heights, City of Bloomington, Carver County, Anoka County, and Sherburne County), this amendment proposes to add six freight projects to the Current Revenue Scenario. The projects were selected as part of MnDOT's Minnesota Highway Freight Program. The competitive statewide process allocates between \$20M and \$25M per year to the highest freight needs in the state. The process was guided by the Statewide Freight Investment Committee, which included a broad range of stakeholders from agencies across the state, including the Metropolitan Council. The six freight projects include the following:

- 117th Ave Reconstruction and Modernization (City of Inver Grove Heights)
- I-35W/I-494 Interchange Improvements (City of Bloomington)
- Highway 212 Rural Freight Safety Project (Carver County)
- I-94 Eastbound Lane Improvement Project (MnDOT, Woodbury/Oakdale)
- Highway 10/169 Ramsey Gateway Project (City of Ramsey, Anoka County)
- Sherburne County 33 Reconstruction and Realignment (City of Elk River, Sherburne County)

Figure 1 – Overview of TPP Amendment Changes



- Minnesota Highway Freight Program Projects (6)
- ~ Transitways Added or Updated in the Current Revenue Scenario
- ~ Transitways Added or Updated in the Increased Revenue Scenario
- ~ Transitways removed from the 2040 TPP

- Reference Items**
- Principal Arterial Highways
 - Lakes and Rivers
 - City Boundary
 - County Boundary
 - 2040 Urban Service Area MPO Area

The Council released the proposed amendment for public comment on December 9, 2021, held a public hearing on January 10, 2022, and closed the public comment period on January 24, 2022. The

Council promoted the public comment period through the website, email distribution lists, social media and an advertisement in the Star Tribune.

There were 56 comments from 41 commentors on the proposed amendment (with the Council response shown as an attachment):

- Twelve comments on the arterial bus rapid transit projects
- Twenty-four comments in support of one of the freight projects (Highway 212)
- Twenty general comments on a wide variety of transportation issues

Based on these comments, one change is recommended. One of the comment letters was from the City of Bloomington. Based on Network Next results, this amendment originally recommended removal of American Boulevard from the Increased Revenue Scenario as an arterial BRT corridor. However, given the unique characteristics of the corridor and the City of Bloomington's commitment to fund a transitway study, the corridor will remain in the TPP's Increased Revenue Scenario as a "transitway to be studied for mode and alignment." The City of Bloomington is satisfied with this change.

Rationale

The Metropolitan Council and its Transportation Advisory Board are required, under both state and federal law, to develop a multimodal long-range regional transportation plan that identifies transportation system goals, needs, and investment priorities over at least a 20-year period.

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

- The proposed improvement meets the definition of a transitway listed in the Transportation Policy Plan or documents referenced within it
- A mode and alignment are identified by a local sponsoring agency and the process for selection is documented, including public involvement summaries
- Documentation is submitted showing how the project can be built with revenues in the fiscally constrained plan (or reasonably expected additional revenues)

In addition, Increased Revenue Scenario transitways can be added if the projects show reasonable promise for transitway service, meet the definitions of transitway service in the TPP, and have undergone a technical process that includes public involvement. Metro Transit has provided the appropriate information to meet these criteria through its Network Next work.

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

- The proposal is consistent with the goals, objectives and strategies of the region's 2040 Transportation Policy Plan
- Documentation is submitted showing how the project can be built with revenues in the fiscally constrained plan (or reasonably expected additional revenues)
- Air Quality Conformity is maintained
- Public Involvement is conducted

MnDOT and the project sponsors have provided the appropriate information to meet these criteria. The Council, in its role as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO), was involved in this freight solicitation process in numerous ways:

- MPO representation on the Statewide Freight Investment Committee.
- Project submittals required MPO letters of support.

- Review period for MPOs after the project application deadline.
- Interchange projects in the metro were required to go through the TPP's Appendix F, Preliminary Interchange Approval Process.
- Metro projects were required to be a Tier 1, 2, or 3 corridor in the Metropolitan Council's Truck Highway Corridor Study in order to apply.
- The MPO and MnDOT worked in cooperation to identify Urban and Rural Critical Freight Corridors in the project areas and were subsequently approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

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, Healthy and Equitable Communities, and Leveraging Transportation to Guide Land Use through strategies and any associated performance measures that are impacted by the added projects. These impacts are strongly aligned with the Thrive outcomes of Prosperity, Livability, Sustainability, and Equity. The text also specifically discusses impacts to transportation finance supporting the Thrive outcome of Stewardship.

Funding

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.

Small Business Inclusion

There are no impacts to small business inclusion.