

## Metropolitan Council's Draft 2022 Unified Planning Work Program City of Minneapolis, Public Works staff comments

September 23, 2022

The City of Minneapolis Public Works Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on Metropolitan Council's Draft 2023 Unified Planning Work Program. We acknowledge and appreciate the ongoing collaboration with the City of Minneapolis through the numerous 2022 accomplishments articulated in the document.

We appreciate the efforts of the Metropolitan Council is taking to address climate change and reduce disparities in the region. Similar to our comments on last year's UPWP, we encourage Metropolitan Council to find ways to continue 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. Systemically building into these processes incentives for VMT reduction and mode shift towards safe and comfortable walking, biking and transit will help the region more quickly achieve greater outcomes and increase prosperity.

The following specific comments reflect the vision and direction the City of Minneapolis is undertaking related to transportation, as outlined in recent plans, including Minneapolis 2040, the Climate Action Plan, Transportation Action Plan, Vision Zero Action Plan and 20 Year Streets Funding Plan. We hope the comments further the regional progress around increased attention to and action around climate, equity, safety, mobility and prosperity, and that they will be considered as the draft Unified Planning Work Program is revised and/or the activities are undertaken in 2023 and beyond.

### Work Continuing from 2022

- We are encouraged by the work the Council is undertaking around better understanding themes around equity, transportation attitudes, and taking a deeper dive into the impact of the modeling and potential changes to the regional model, as its use is so important in terms of reaching climate and mode shift goals.
- In particular, we are pleased work is continuing on the following, and we look forward to seeing the results:
  - Equity Populations Engagement Master Contract (early 2022 start)
  - Regional Travel Demand Management Study (late 2021 start)
  - TPP Goals Review, Engagement and Update (estimated 4th quarter 2022 start)
  - Regional Transportation and Climate Change Multimodal Measures (estimated 3rd quarter 2022 start)
  - Transportation Attitudes and Needs Assessment (3rd quarter 2022 start)
  - Equity Evaluation of Regional Transportation Investment (early 2022 start; non-UPWP funded)
- A. Planning and Programming Process
  - As ongoing efforts continue to adjust Regional Solicitation scoring procedures continue, and the effort for a major evaluation of the Regional Solicitation begins (estimated completion 2026), the City encourages Metropolitan Council to consider the following:

- Use the potential for mode shift and non-motorized counts as evaluation measures in the applications (Transportation Action Plan [Street Operations Action 3.3](#))
  - More explicitly invest and award projects to promote racial equity within the framework and project selection process (Transportation Action Plan [Progress Action 1.9](#)).
- We are encouraged that three priorities from 2022 remain related to expanding engagement, and look forward to learning more about these efforts:
  - Use the Equity Populations Engagement Master Contract to engage with three or more contractors on focused transportation engagement activities within on-going planning studies.
  - Identify additional opportunities for focused engagement with BIPOC and low-income communities for on-going transportation studies.
  - Develop and design outreach program with consultant through the Equity Populations Engagement Master Contract.

#### B. Modal System Planning

- We are pleased to see a new study in the work program, *Metropolitan Highway System Harms, Impacts and Mitigation Priorities*. We would like to participate as appropriate when you commence this work.
- In freight planning, we are glad to see the plan to finish the *Urban Freight Distribution Study* consider freight needs and opportunities to reduce regional carbon footprint related to freight; we look forward to seeing results.
- 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 resolve the long-standing unknown transit future of the Midtown Greenway corridor. This is needed to make good decisions with respect to long-term investments, including bridges, as many investments being planned and made along and over the Midtown Greenway. We see the need for regional alignment of the LPA identified through previous planning studies and as identified in the increased revenue scenario in the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan with the current/future planning efforts and planned investments.
- Regional transit studies should be coordinated with the Principal Arterial Intersection Conversion Study 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 appreciate being a part of on-going efforts of the Transit Technical Working Group.
- As electric bicycles continue to gain in popularity and change the landscape of bicycling, we encourage the Met Council to assess if there is a need to evaluate any current guidance or active practices related to the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network or the bicycle barriers work.

#### C. Long Range System Planning

- We are happy to partner with the Met Council as you prepare the draft of the 2050 TPP; we are looking forward to supporting work to best incorporate climate and equity into the vision, objectives, policies and actions of the next Transportation Policy Plan. We encourage regional VMT reduction goals, GHG reduction goals, and mode shift goals are

considered and adopted in the update, and become influential metrics in the award of Regional Solicitation funds.

- We support the activities proposed under the Environment Justice and Equity task and are a willing partner to support this work. We look forward to the identification of regional equity metrics and evaluation measures to be used in transportation planning work and investment decision-making.
- 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. In addition, we look forward to progress on a tool related to predicting emission levels and comparing effectiveness of regional strategies.
- We encourage the work undertaken in the Transportation Finance task to align with the goals in the Climate Change task through an evaluation of how investments support climate goals.

#### D. Travel Model Development and Forecasting

- 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.
- 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.
- In consideration of statewide and local goals around VMT reduction and mode shift goals, 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 building projects that better achieve environmental outcomes, including greenhouse gas reductions (Transportation Action Plan [Street Operations Action 3.1](#)). Please consider how to allow projects to lower/eliminate the growth factor in project planning when that is out of line with local and regional plans/policies and does not reflect recent trends.

#### E. Short-Range Planning and Performance Monitoring

- 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. Additionally, impacts of remote work are changing how congestion is experienced throughout the region, and positively impacting climate and greenhouse gas reduction goals. We support a review of recent commuting trends to identify how remote work has changed typical weekday travel along major freeways to better inform investment strategies, and not focus on overbuilding an already underfunded highway system. We encourage these results to inform and tie to the work of the regional travel demand model.

#### F. Non-CPG (Locally Funded) Planning Activities

- We look forward to seeing the results of activities and work on the non-CPG funded studies, and to partnering as appropriate.