

Business Item

Transportation Committee



Committee Meeting Date: February 13, 2023

For the Metropolitan Council: February 22, 2023

Business Item: 2023-33

Authority to Execute the METRO Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit Full Funding Grant Agreement if Awarded by the Federal Transit Administration

District(s), Member(s):	District 12, District 11 (Vento), District 13 (Lee)
Policy/Legal Reference:	FM 14-1 - Procurement Policy RF 1-7 – Transitway Advancement Policy
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Lesley Kandaras, Interim General Manager, 612-349-7513 Nick Thompson, Deputy General Manager, 612-349-7507 Alicia Vap, Gold Line Project Director, 612-349-7079
Division/Department:	Metro Transit / METRO Gold Line Project Office

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council (Council) authorize the Chair and the Regional Administrator to execute the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) for the METRO Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in an amount of \$239,345,549 if awarded by the FTA.

Background

The Gold Line BRT Project (Project) entered the FTA New Starts Project Development phase in January 2018. The Project was later amended into the Transportation Policy Plan in April 2019. The publication of the Project Environmental Assessment occurred in 2019, followed by the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) from the FTA and Federal Highway Administration in 2020. The Project was granted entry into the FTA New Starts Engineering phase in April 2021.

The Project is a 10-mile transitway in Ramsey and Washington Counties in the eastern part of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The line will travel between downtown Saint Paul and Woodbury, serving the cities of Saint Paul, Maplewood, Landfall, Oakdale, and Woodbury. The route runs along local roadways generally north of and near Interstate-94 primarily within bus-only lanes. The Project includes seven miles of exclusive bus lanes covering nearly 70% of the route, 17 buses (12 diesel and 5 electric), five electric charging stations, 16 branded stations, off-board fare collection, construction of 438 surface and 512 structured park-and-ride spaces, transit signal priority including early and extended green signals, and bicycle and pedestrian access improvements, as well as improvements to the East Metro bus garage in Saint. Paul.

Rationale

The Council requested the FFGA from the FTA in February 2022. The FTA has now completed all required assessments, and found the Council fit to design, construct, and operate the Gold Line BRT service. The FTA has also approved a Letter of No Prejudice (LONP) which allowed the Council to incur construction costs for the civil construction of the Project prior to the FFGA, and

retain eligibility of those expenditures for future FTA grant assistance once the FFGA is executed. This requested action is to seek Council authority to execute the FFGA as soon as the FTA indicates it is ready to do so.

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 and improving access to jobs, educational opportunities, and health services to diverse communities.

Funding

The FTA requires the Council to obtain funding to match the federal grant as part of the FFGA. Matching funds have been committed from local funding partners, including the former Counties Transit Improvement Board, Ramsey County, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority, Washington County, the State of Minnesota, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation totaling \$252 million. In addition, the project was awarded regional solicitation federal funding of \$13 million in the form of Surface Transportation Block Grants. The FTA FFGA federal funding will be included in a future capital budget amendment after the FTA award and grant execution.

Small Business Inclusion

The Gold Line Contracts, including the construction contract, will be funded in part using the funds from the FFGA. The Gold Line civil construction contract has a DBE goal of 17%.

