

Business Item

Transportation Committee



Committee Meeting Date: January 13, 2025

For the Metropolitan Council: January 22, 2025

Business Item: 2024-15

Regionally Significant 2025-2028 TIP Amendment – I-494 E-ZPass Extension and Improvements

District(s), Member(s): District 5, Pacheco

Policy/Legal Reference: TAB Action

Staff Prepared/Presented:

Amy Vennewitz, Deputy Director of Finance and Planning, 651-602-1058

Steve Peterson, Senior Manager, 651-602-1819

Robbie King, Planner, 651-602-1380

Division/Department: Metropolitan Transportation Services

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council adopt an amendment to the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to add a new regionally significant project to extend E-ZPass lanes, reconstruct mainline pavement, improve drainage, rehabilitate bridges, and add ADA improvements on I-494 from Penn Avenue to 34th Avenue, I-494 from US 169 to MN 100, and I-35W from 86th St to 76th Street.

Background

MnDOT requests an amendment to the 2025-2028 TIP to add its regionally significant Interstate 494 E-ZPass extension project (SP# 2785-462). This project will extend the I-494 E-ZPass lanes, reconstruct mainline pavement, improve drainage, and add ADA improvements on I-494 from Penn Avenue to 34th Avenue, I-494 from US 169 to MN 100, and I-35W from 86th St to 76th Street in Richfield and Bloomington. This project is funded with \$135,000,000 of federal funds, along with \$85,000,000 of Corridors of Commerce funds.

The public comment period ran from November 21 to December 11 and three comments were received. Each of these comments expressed opposition. Two of the comments in opposition expressed concern with lane expansion because of potential impact to increase vehicle miles traveled and a desire to divert funds to transit and bike/pedestrian projects. An additional comment expressed opposition to expanding E-ZPass lanes and expressed support for adding general purpose lanes as a method of decreasing congestion.

Rationale

The Metropolitan Council approves formal amendments to the TIP. The projects are consistent with the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) and meet fiscal constraint because the federal and state funds are sufficient to fully fund the projects.

Thrive Lens Analysis

This action promotes livability by distributing state and federal funds to transportation safety projects.

Funding

The projects are fully funded with federal and state funds.

Small Business Inclusion

Each of the projects included in this request is federally funded. The Minnesota Department of Transportation will oversee the federal requirements, including the DBE requirement.



2025-2028 TIP AMENDMENT REQUEST

Please amend the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to (add/adjust) the below (project/projects) (more info, if needed).

Project identification

Seq #	TBD
State Fiscal Year (State)	2026
ATP and District	METRO
Route System	I494
Project Number (S.P. #)	2785-462
Agency	MNDOT
Description	**PRS**COC3**INFRA** ON I-494 FROM TH 169 TO TH 100, PENN AVE TO 34 TH AVE IN BLOOMINGTON AND ON I-35W FROM 86 TH ST IN BLOOMINGTON TO 76 TH ST IN RICHFIELD, MOBILITY & SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS, RECONSTRUCT MAINLINE PAVEMENT, DRAINAGE, AND ADA IMPROVEMENTS, RECONSTRUCT BRIDGES 9289, 9213, 9081A, 9081 AND 9082, REHAB BRIDGES 9078, 27709, 27712 AND 27820, REPLACE SIGNALS AT FRANCE AVE & 24 TH AVE.
Miles	7.62
Program	MAJOR CONSTRUCTION
Type of Work	GRADE AND SURFACE
Proposed Funds	COC BONDS, FFM
Total \$	\$220,000,000
FHWA \$	\$135,000,000
COC BONDS	\$85,000,000
LOCAL	NA

Background and TIP Amendment Need

This amendment is needed to add a new SFY26 project in the 2025-2028 TIP.

Fiscal Constraint (as required by 23 CFR 450.216)

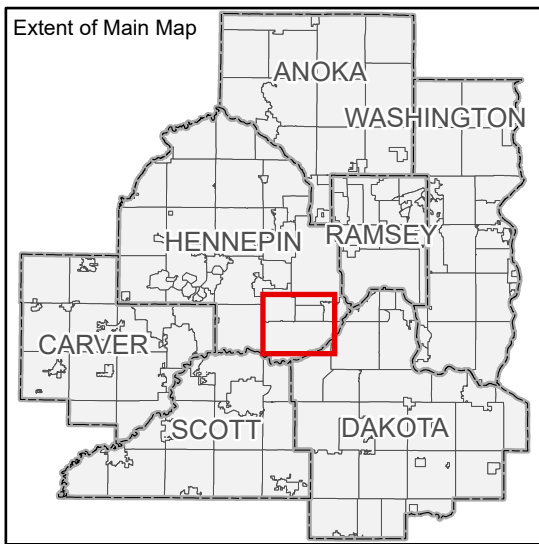
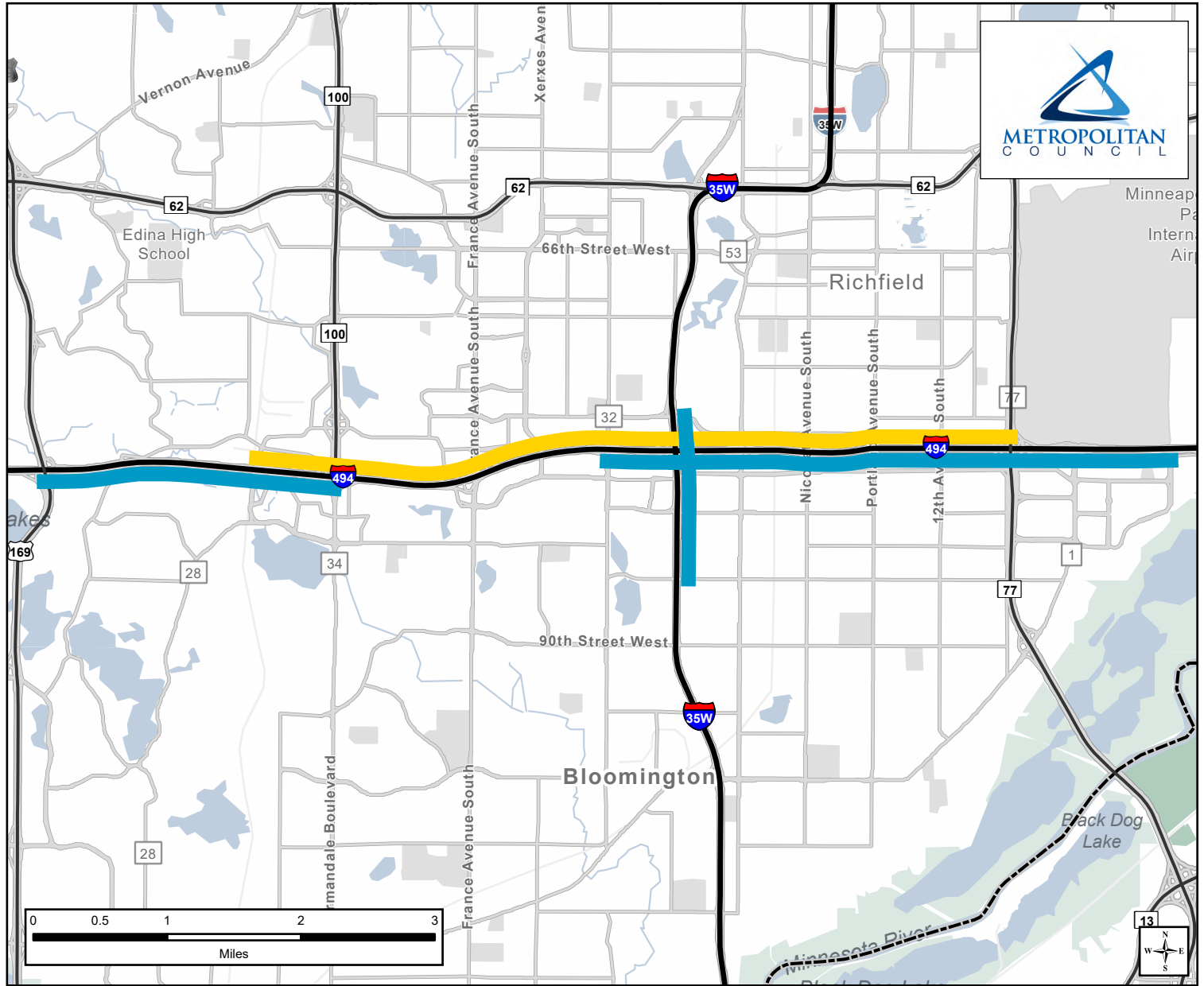
Federal funds available from Discretionary IIJA grant awarded 10/21/2024 and Corridors of Commerce (COC) Bonds available from SP 2748-65 are sufficient to fully fund this project therefore fiscal restraint is maintained.

Consistency with MPO Long-Range Plan

This amendment is consistent with the Metropolitan Council Transportation Policy Plan, adopted by the Metropolitan Council on November 18, 2020, with FHWA/FTA conformity determination established on December 4, 2020.

TAB Action Transmittal: 2024-48

Regionally Significant TIP Amendment – I-494 E-ZPass Extension and Improvements Project



State Project Number: 2785-642

TIP Description:

****PRS**COC3**INFRA**** ON I-494 FROM TH 169 TO TH 100, PENN AVE TO 34TH AVE IN BLOOMINGTON AND ON I-35W FROM 86TH ST IN BLOOMINGTON TO 76TH ST IN RICHFIELD, MOBILITY & SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS, RECONSTRUCT MAINLINE PAVEMENT, DRAINAGE, AND ADA IMPROVEMENTS, RECONSTRUCT BRIDGES 9289, 9213, 9081A, 9081 AND 9082, REHAB BRIDGES 9078, 27709, 27712 AND 27820, REPLACE SIGNALS AT FRANCE AVE & 24TH AVE.

Reference Layers

- Ongoing Construction
- TIP Amendment
- Interstate Highways
- State, US Highways and County Roads

Source: County of Dakota, Metropolitan Council, MetroGIS, Three Rivers Park District, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS



U.S. Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Project Name: I-494 E-ZPass Project
Grantee: Minnesota Department of Transportation
Grant Funding: \$138,001,000
Sources: INFRA FY 25 Large - \$25,000,000, INFRA FY 26 Large - \$113,001,000
Estimated Future Eligible Project Costs: \$331,500,000
INFRA Leverage Pilot Designation: No

Project Description: The project will add E-ZPass lanes on I-494 in both directions between Highway 169 and East Bush Lake Road, and I-35W and Highway 77; replace old infrastructure including a railroad bridge over I-494 between Lyndale Avenue and Nicollet Avenue; and reconstruct the interchange at I-35W and 82nd Street.

Congratulations! The project listed above was selected to receive an MPDG FY 2025-2026 grant.

All grantees must execute a grant agreement in a timely manner with the USDOT. This letter does not authorize the grantee to incur costs to carry out the project. The execution of the grant agreement will obligate INFRA grant funding, making it available to reimburse eligible expenses for the awarded project. Unless authorized by USDOT in writing, any costs incurred prior to execution of the grant agreement for a project (i.e., "pre-award costs") are ineligible for reimbursement and may be ineligible to count towards non-Federal match requirements. Written pre-approval is required for all pre-award costs, including those considered under 23 U.S.C. § 117(k). This letter does not authorize pre-award costs to be eligible.

Your prepopulated draft grant agreement from USDOT is attached. As a condition of this award, the Department expects grantees to execute grant agreements and obligate within 30 days of meeting the obligation pre-requisites, including phased obligations. Execution of a grant agreement to obligate INFRA funds may occur as early as December 15, 2024, if requirements are met. All agreements must be executed and fully obligated by September 30, 2028.

To accelerate project delivery and fund access to grantees, USDOT has assigned this project multiple years of funding, of which the FY 2025 portion could be obligated promptly to advance preconstruction activities under a phased agreement. Please review to confirm or adjust the amount required for the first phase of this agreement to advance your project, and submit a revised grant agreement to USDOT by November 20, 2024.

The Office of the Secretary will hold a Welcome Webinar to provide a high-level overview of the program and next steps on November 7, 2024 at 3pm Eastern. Recipients may register here:

https://usdot.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_3RnVDCMSTIW_SMf6f4yd2w.

The USDOT Operating Administration (OA) overseeing your project will contact you in the coming weeks regarding next steps to complete the relevant requirements. Please copy MPDGGrants@dot.gov upon initial submission of revised grant agreement to the OA point of contact.

If you have any questions about this award, please contact the MPDG Team at MPDGGrants@dot.gov.

Sincerely,

John Augustine

Director, Office of Infrastructure Finance and Innovation
Office of the Secretary

PUBLIC COMMENT REPORT

2025-2028 TIP – Regionally Significant Project Addition

Dec 2024

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

Metropolitan Council Members

Charlie Zelle	Chair	Diego Morales	District 9
Judy Johnson	District 1	Peter Lindstrom	District 10
Reva Chamblis	District 2	Gail Cederberg	District 11
Tyronne Carter	District 3	Susan Vento	District 12
Deb Barber	District 4	Chai Lee	District 13
John Pacheco Jr.	District 5	Toni Carter	District 14
Robert Lilligren	District 6	Tenzin Dolkar	District 15
Yassin Osman	District 7	Wendy Wulff	District 16
Anjuli Cameron	District 8		



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.

On request, this publication will be made available in alternative formats to people with disabilities. Call Metropolitan Council information at 651-602-1140 or TTY 651-291-0904.

Background

The Metropolitan Council accepted comments on amending the region's 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Public comments were accepted from November 21, 2024, to December 12, 2024. The requested amendment would add the I-494 E-ZPass Extension and Improvements Project to the TIP. The Council received a total of three comments. This includes zero supportive comments. Three people expressed opposition to the project.

The following report includes a table of comments received and responses from Met Council staff. Nine commenters participated.

People engaged

- Web page
 - Views: 147
 - Visitors: 70
- GovDelivery
 - Opens: 4,813
 - Unique clicks: 283

Comments received through:

- Email

Methods used

- Web announcement and web page notice
- GovDelivery email announcement and reminder

Comments and Responses

The table below contains written comments as received, along with a response from Met Council staff.

Commenter	Topic	Comment	Response
Brian Martinson	GHG & VMT Reduction	<p>Between the ongoing work MNDOT is pursuing to reconstruct the 494/35W interchange and this nearly quarter of a billion dollar capacity expansion project being proposed, that interchange looks to cost the public upwards of half a *billion* dollars. These expenditures have been largely sold to the public as important for reducing traffic congestion in the 494 and 35W corridors. With the magnitude of such outlays of public funding, there should be an obligation for some accountability about whether and to what extent these projects accomplish their putative goals.</p> <p>Among the stated "core values" Met Council's Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) is: "Accountability: Measuring impact and being open to change."</p> <p>Yet there is no evidence that any measurement and reporting of any outcomes of these enormous expenditures are planned or will take place.</p> <p>In the short run, these projects may reduce traffic congestion to some degree, but it has been extensively documented that such capacity expansion projects "induce demand" for driving in very close to a 1:1 ratio, so they *cause* more people to drive their cars more miles, and typically within 5-8 years, the congestion will be as bad, if not worse, than it is before the capacity expansion. This is not idle speculation, but well established in the empirical research on this topic.</p> <p>By failing to incorporate measurement of putative outcomes using sound methodology and data, MNDOT and Met Council continue to ignore the evidence and remain unaccountable. In an era of ongoing climate disruption and increasing destruction of the livability of our planet, largely driven by our dependence on single-occupancy motor vehicles, this is nothing short of reprehensible and amoral. Our children and their children will judge us for the lack of leadership we have shown.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. The aim of the project is to improve safety and travel time reliability in the I-494 corridor. The managed lane will provide transit users, carpoolers, and drivers an option to get through one of the most congested corridors in the entire state.</p> <p>One of the key elements of the project is the construction of E-ZPass lanes from Hwy 77 to Hwy 169. These lanes provide a reliable trip through the corridor during peak times when the other lanes may be congested. The lanes are available to transit, carpoolers, and E-ZPass customers. MnDOT collects significant data on the use and operation of the E-ZPass lanes. After the project is complete and the E-ZPass lanes are open there will be ongoing analysis on the operation of the lanes.</p> <p>In the federal grant agreement for the \$138M of INFRA funding, MnDOT is required to report on before-and-after crash rates. In addition, the MnPASS system has a set of performance metrics such as tracking that the E-ZPASS lane operates at 45 mph or greater for 90% of the time (a measure of reliability).</p>
Julian Serrano	General	TIP is all HIGHWAYS and nothing for Transit and fail to address the land use that are hostile for walking and transit. Businesses are leaving the inner cities in	Thank you for your comment. The TIP includes all federal transportation

Commenter	Topic	Comment	Response
		<p>droves leaving people stranded for jobs and retail without a car. EX FAIRVIEW HOSPITALS left ST PAUL and move many of their operations to the SUBURBS for people without cars it waste their time and is a major inconvenient The highways make the SUBURBS too easy & cheap for businesses to move abandoning the central cities.</p> <p>METRO TRANSIT is top heavy with P/R (which) is poor land use around them Housings need to be built near /on top and on p/R lots. There are more commuter routes than all day local routes The SUBURBAN routes get better buses.</p> <p>STOP (subsidizing) driving and offer subsidy for business that reduce parking Time for PARKING CASH OUT.</p> <p>LAND for Houses not to park cars when housings are so unaffordable.</p>	<p>projects, including over \$1 billion in federal transit funding and over \$1.5 billion in non-federal transit funds.</p> <p>We appreciate your input and will share it with transit providers.</p>
	Highway Investment and Expansion	<p>Under NO circumstances should E-ZPass be extended. E-ZPass should be outright illegal, and removed from all existing locations.</p> <p>We the People fund all roadway construction, maintenance, and improvement. None of us should be excluded from highway lanes due to failure to pay extra (which we already do, via motor vehicle fuel taxes) or be discriminated against due to the number of people in a vehicle.</p> <p>END E-ZPass. Congestion is a problem, so ADD MORE LANES and RAISE THE SPEED LIMITS. Speed limits currently in force are grotesquely low. Every speed limit in Minnesota could be raised by AT LEAST 25%, rounded-up to the nearest 5 mph increment. Why there is a speed limit at all on rural Interstate highways is beyond me.</p> <p>Why is the State of Minnesota not pushing-back against overbearing, expensive Federal ADA requirements? ADA has become burdensome.</p>	Thank you for your comment.