



## ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION WORKING GROUP

### Meeting #5 Notes

May 23, 2024

3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams

Working Group Members (bold indicates member in attendance)

- **Glen Johnson** (Chair & TAB Citizen Rep)
- **Brian Martinson** (Vice Chair & TAB Non-Motorized Rep)
- James Hovland (TAB Chair)
- Hwa Jeong Kim (TAB, St. Paul)
- **Mary Liz Holberg** (TAB, Dakota Co)
- **Peter Dugan** (TAB Citizen Rep)
- **Amity Foster** (TAB Transit Rep)
- Aurin Chowdhury (TAB, Minneapolis)
- Mark Steffenson (TAB, Maple Grove)
- **Julie Jeppson** (TAB, Anoka Co)
- Alexander Ask (TAB, Non-Motorized Rep Alternate)
- **Jeni Hager** (TAC Chair)
- Brian Issacson (TAC Vice Chair)
- **Michael Thompson** (TAC F&P Chair)
- Marc Briese (State-Aid AT Rep)
- **Aaron Tag** (TAC F&P, MnDOT)
- **Craig Jenson** (Bike-Ped WG Co-Chair)
- **Jordan Kocak** (Bike-Ped WG Co-Chair)

Other external attendees:

1. **Meeting 4 recap and 5.15.24 TAB meeting feedback (Glen Johnson, Chair) (Meeting 4 Notes)**
2. **Revisit 2024 Regional Solicitation active transportation funding (Steve Peterson)**
  - a. **Discussion: TAC feedback and whether to increase AT funding available in 2024 RS**

Member Holberg asked the full additional funding would be?

Steve Peterson responded that the scenario could add up to \$6 million more in active transportation funding.

Member Holberg noted that she had concerns about adding more projects and overwhelming staff time for the pilot.

Charles Carlson stated that staff has met with MnDOT State Aid and Met Council LPA staff on grants administration and thinks that adding 3 more projects would not be an issue. Council has a grants department and would be a source to build upon for MTS.

Steve Peterson agreed and stated that 3 more projects would not be a capacity issue.

Amy Vennewitz also agreed and added that this group will be key in keeping the grant administration aspect simple, both the application and administration aspect. She added to not institute overly

cumbersome rules on the management of grants to ensure the process is smooth and efficient for everyone.

Member Foster asked what the reasoning is to add more funds?

Steve Peterson replied that it was from general interest to adding more projects because there were so many submittals and wanting to see more of the projects receive funding this year. We have good projects sitting in front of us and would be good use of AT funds this year.

Chair Johnson noted that the group will need to have a recommendation in June to send the final decision on what we want to see going forward.

Lyssa Leitner (TAC representative) stated that it would be fine to put the scenario forward, but that the opinion of TAC was not universal for more funds to AT projects. She thinks personally that saving more funding for a future solicitation that is more open is preferred. She clarified that some members asked for additional funds to be spent. Other members of TAC and F&P are against this since so few agencies (mostly cities) actually applied because Regional Solicitation is such a cumbersome process. Those groups preferred keeping the funds to use for a future solicitation that is streamlined/easier to apply for.

Member Hager stated that she did not strongly feel one way or another on more funding for this year Solicitation. She wants the pilot to be successful and just wanted to be clear that TAC was mainly concerned that the bike/ped heavy scenario did not add any additional pedestrian or SRTS projects and was wondering how to get more projects in that scenario funded.

Elaine Koutsoukos replied that the bike/ped heavy scenario is simply putting the bike and ped funding to the maximum allowed under the funding ranges set by TAB – so there is a hard limit to the number of projects that can receive funding through the scenario – adding AT funding would allow the number of projects to increase more.

Chari Johnson asked how much funding is estimated to be accrued by the end of 2024?

Steve Peterson replied that the anticipated funding is still \$24M per year. He noted that real dollars are trending lower than the anticipated number, but MMB has yet to revise the expected revenue.

Chair Johnson stated that even with more funding put in, it appears that there would be no issue with being able to support these projects.

Council staff posted real returns from the first 5 months of collections which shows \$8M collected so far.

Amy Vennewitz said that they have been watching the money and have not yet changed expectations for revenue. She added that this tax is a sale and a use tax, the use tax aspect is different than a simple sales tax and still needs time to catch up which should boost the real revenue numbers later.

Steve Peterson noted that the question of more funding for 2024 is intertwined with the question of whether to do a 2025 solicitation or not – if no 2025 solicitation, then more money would be available to fund more projects in 2024.

Member Dugan stated that he thinks a 2025 solicitation would be a big lift for staff and the work group – he added that if possible, he would advocate for all SRTS projects to be funded if more projects are to be funded in 2024.

Member Holberg said that feedback from TAC did not seem strong and she thinks we should stay \$15M as previously voted on, we got a good decision on that with broad consent.

Member Jepson stated that if TAC gave a clear direction, she would be open to considering more funding for 2024, but it did not seem to be the case. The simplest solution would be to stick to the original plan, no clear direction in this case is the answer to sticking with the current plan.

### **3. Active Transportation Solicitation priorities/principles discussion**

Staff presented funding sources, feedback from regional solicitation evaluation listening sessions

Chair Johnson asked if funding restrictions to various funding sources are the same as federal funding.

Amy Vennewitz replied that the legislation was silent on this topic other than specifying the two specific points – not a lot of limitations on usage.

Chair Johnson stated that cities and park districts currently do not have dedicated AT funding sources at all.

Member Foster asked about dedicated county funding, how are the priorities of these funds going to be decided?

Amy Vennewitz replied that the priorities are up to each county to decide, they are only required to dedicate a certain amount to AT in the county, each county can decide how to do this.

Lyssa Leitner replied that every county is doing something different. She stated that she has not heard of any county dedicated funds to cities for AT projects. In Washington County we are discussing lowering city cost share requirements on large projects for instance.

Member Holberg replied that they are trying to figure that out in Dakota County right now. Dakota County has an identified greenway system and are discussing building this out with new funding. This raises the issue of this funding – one goal is that is easy so cities can apply to build out their local networks.

Chair Johnson opened the discussion on values and priorities for the AT funding.

Member Jepson stated that the funding should not be limited to projects, planning needs to go into this as well. Projects not ready yet still need to be identified in many communities in the region, if not including planning, then many will be left out. She also stated that there is a difference between recreation and transportation – AT is more of a specific purpose of getting a regional system to get people to where they need to go.

Member Foster stated that she agreed with Member Jepson. We need to use this money to build out networks that allow people to make transportation decisions to shift modes. We cant just be building out trails, we need a safe means to get around the whole region, needs to be more functional than scenic or recreational. She reiterated that the functional system should be in addition to the great trail system, but right now we focus most regional funding on trails instead of more functional networks.

Chair Johnson also pointed out that we also have the aspect of the last items to complete networks which currently are difficult to get funding for.

Member Holberg asked if there was a way to accomplish multiple goals with projects?

Member Dugan suggested that we create set asides for specific amount of money with the goal of completing the regional system – like how the aBRT funding has been set up – providing consistent funding source for a specific purpose has been successful with transit.

Member Jepson pointed out that in the 2023 VMT/GHG reduction legislation that if either of these measures increase, we will need to plan to mitigate this growth in some way – this process should not be siloed and take into account other restrictions or initiatives going on simultaneously.

Member Jepson asked if we have a good idea of what the current AT system looks like in the region so we can see where there are gaps?

Member Jepson stated that she would recommend waiting until 2026 for the next AT solicitation to have all the information that can help with effectively building out a regional AT system. She asked staff if they would move up the sidewalk study to be able to have a database to understand where facilities are currently lacking.

Member Holberg stated that a good first project would be to understand what it would cost to build out the regional AT system.

Member Foster suggested that a good project (as an idea of what this funding could do) would be to focus on ADA compliance in core cities which otherwise are unable to systematically update existing infrastructure.

Lyssa Leitner stated that by its nature pedestrian and bicycle trips are going to be more local – filling gaps may be something that doesn't show up clearly with more data. Will say that the current Regional Solicitation does not fund on-street facilities well today and could be a gap that this funding could fill.

Chair Johnson stated that the sidewalk gaps and ADA accessibility issues are bigger than he realized.

Vice Chair Martinson mentioned that multimodal connections are also important to consider. He also noted that the City of Edmonton Canada is planning on building out a comprehensive network for bikes to a cost of \$400M.

Member Dugan reiterated that the group must also consider staff time and availability for this work as well.

#### **4. 2025 Active Transportation Solicitation Discussion**

##### **a. Timeline of 2025 AT Solicitation**

##### **b. Pros and cons of 2025 solicitation**

##### **c. 2025 AT Solicitation Application decisions to consider**

Chair Johnson brought back the question for a 2025 solicitation.

Member Foster asked if we skipped 2025, would there enough projects to fill this gap? If skipping we should make it clear that we are looking BIG network connecting projects.

Member Holberg replied that it would be easy to spend \$50M on AT projects in the region.

Nathan Koster replied that in just the Multiuse Trail category in the 2024 RS there was \$114M in requests.

Members Dugan, Jepson, Hager, Holberg, Jenson and Foster recommended not to move forward with a 2025 solicitation. This will receive a formal vote at the next meeting.

#### **5. Next Steps**

Things to understand before next meeting:

How much money is accumulating?

Include information on the bike barrier study and any other network data to share to the group.

Summary and proposal for the group's values and priorities for the new AT funding.