



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION WORKING GROUP NOTES

March 27, 2024

Attendees: Glen Johnson, Brian Martinson, James Hovland, Peter Dugan, Amity Foster, Mark Steffenson, Julie Jeppson, Brian Issacson, Michael Thompson, Aaron Tag, Craig Jenson, Jordan Kocak, Lyssa Leitner, Joe Widing, Steve Peterson, Amy Vennewitz, Charles Carlson, Bethany Brandt-Sargent, Joe Barbeau, Elaine Koutsoukos, Heidi Schallberg, Robbie King, Ashwat Narayanan

Chair Johnson went over the previous meeting.

Steve Peterson presented the current legislative requirements for regional active transportation funds and 2024 funding details to be discussed.

Vice Chair Martinson stated that staff should go back to applicants to ask for additional details regarding legislative requirements and project timing without need for work group recommendation.

- Chair Johnson agreed and said staff should move to ask applicants for additional information ASAP. If a lot of applicants come to say the requirements are an issue, than the workgroup can deal with that at the next meeting.
- Steve Peterson responded that staff would move to ask questions and noted that on project timing, it is likely if applicants did not indicate they could do the project earlier they likely cannot as a lot coordination is needed for projects, but will confirm with follow-up.

Member Hovland said that he thinks the 2024 funding option is a good idea and that we should be funding at least one project from each active transportation category.

Steve Peterson stated that thinking about early projects, we could focus on projects that have indicated they could start within one or two years of receiving funding.

- Member Thompson replied that timeline would be reasonable for applicants, not making these projects federalized could help to accelerate timelines for project development. He also stated that he would not want to see too much put into projects this year as many smaller communities do not apply for RS due to the federal aspect and other complexities. If there is an independent AT solicitation with only regional money, this would widen the applicant pool than RS applications and help to entice new applicants.
- Chair Johnson said that even if we limit to just projects that can go in 2025 or 26 that we should still have plenty of projects to fund.

Member Hovland asked if we have discussed the process for selecting projects?

- Chair Johnson replied that we could choose a number for each category and see how much they sum up to.
- Steve Peterson stated that it would be easier to select a dollar value or range and just have at least one project from each category. With bike projects if needed to get a specific amount of projects, may result in skipping higher scored projects or putting too much funding toward one or two large projects.

Chair Johnson asked about the current project selection process for categories in the RS?

- Steve Peterson responded that typically staff look at the number of project applicants and the dollar value of projects to weigh on where to put the funding cut off line for each category.

- Chair Johnson followed up on this and noted that we could choose more from pedestrian projects as there are more projects from that category to follow the general RS process.

Steve Peterson noted that it is an advantage to have regional funds, as they have less requirements. Should reward the highest scoring projects with this funding and fill in lower scoring projects with federal funds.

- Elaine Koutsoukos agreed that regional funding should go to top scoring projects and push federal funding down the list.

Chair Johnson noted also that we do not want to skip projects just to find ones which can fit the criteria and fund lower ranking projects over others higher on the list.

Member Jepson asked if we are capping projects submitted in total or requested amount?

- Chair Johnson replied that it the requested amount that cap would apply to not total project amount.

Member Foster asked if we are focusing on early projects, what would we do if there are none in a specific category that would meet that requirement?

- Steve Peterson responded that we should have enough from each category so it should not be an issue that comes up.

Chair Johnson asked what the current award amounts are for each category.

- Steve Peterson replied that the max award for bike/multi-use trail is \$5.5M, pedestrian is \$2M and SRTS is \$1M.

Chair Johnson noted that this cap would not restrict any pedestrian or SRTS projects, would only potentially impact bike projects, but still have 11 that are under the cap.

Member Jenson stated that we still do not know where the federal funding lines would be for this year. He said that having too many requirements might be overly restrictive at this time and could make issues without more information. He thinks fewer restrictions should be recommended at this time and should only state that at least one project from each category gets funded and to have just a total funding amount to distribute.

- Member Thompson agreed with member Jenson. He said that we should try and equally distribute the pilot money across the three categories to the max extent possible.

Chair Johnson agreed and asked if a funding range or total limit would be better for this?

- Steve Peterson responded that either a range or limit would be fine.

Elaine Koutsoukos stated that a range would be preferable in some cases. In the bridge category a range has helped. If some projects come just over a hard limit, it may take them out of eligibility.

Member Hovland likes the idea of including at least one project rather than requiring certain number from each category.

Vice Chair Martinson said that when we go back to applicants we should ask them to go back into their comp plans or other city plans to answer the questions – show the connection.

Elaine Koutsoukos said that if we set a range and cannot find enough projects to meet the range and requirements, it would be up to TAB to accept this or not. If requirement 2 (complete streets) is found to be an issue, that might inform future considerations for AT solicitations.

Chair Johnson summed up the conversation by stating we should be selecting at least one project from each category for the pilot.

Vice Chair Martinson asked what the best way to frame the action transmittal?

- Steve Peterson replied that the specific projects would move with all other RS projects up for funding but be voted on by TAB separately, similar to how carbon reduction funds were awarded last cycle. We could see how AT funds play out with funding scenarios.

Chair Johnson asked what the timeline is to expect?

- Steve Peterson replied that the ranked score list is still deciding on, likely going in April or may → AT projects could be added to this list.

Chair Johnson stated that it appears that there is consensus in the group, not hearing any objections to the direction of 2024 funding option. Asked staff if voting on a recommendation should be done today.

- Amy Vennewitz replied that it would preferable to have an information item at TAB to weigh if any large objections to direction the work group is taking but that a vote could also be done to forward a recommendation to TAB, this would give staff clearer direction to move forward with.

Chair Johnson stated that he would like to hold a vote today.

- Member Hovland agreed that he supports voting today.

The Working Group voted on the following motion.

1. To distribute up to \$15 million in regional sales tax funds for Regional Solicitation Active Transportation projects.
2. To select at least one project from each active transportation category in the Regional Solicitation (Multiuse Trails, Pedestrian and Safe Routes to School).
3. To select from smaller projects which requested less than \$2 million funding.
4. To select from projects which can begin their projects early, either in 2025 or 2026. Projects must begin construction by the end of 2026.
5. To select projects that can meet the additional legislative requirements.
6. That the highest scoring Regional Solicitation applications will receive priority for Active Transportation funding.
7. That selected projects will be required to still meet the 20% local match for Regional Solicitation projects.

Member Hovland moved the motion, Member Forster seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. Motion carried 7-0. 3 members not present.