



# POLICYMAKER WORKING GROUP REGIONAL SOLICITATION

September 18, 2024

## Working Group Attendees:

James Hovland; Deb Barber; Glen Johnson; Chris Vaughan; Chris Giesler; Peter Dugan; Khani Sahebjam; Mark Steffenson; Brian Martinson; Debbie Goettel; Mark Windschitl; Toni Carter; Mary Liz Holberg; Jon Ulrich

## Other Attendees:

Steve Peterson (Met Council); Elaine Koutsoukos; (Met Council); Joe Barbeau (Met Council); Bethany Brandt-Sargent (Met Council); Cole Hiniker (Met Council); Charles Carlson (Met Council); Amy Vennewitz (Met Council); Robbie King (Met Council); Kate Nelson (Office of CM Chamblis); Molly Stewart (SRF Consulting Group); Marie Cote (SRF Consulting Group); Madeleine Garces (SRF Consulting Group); Katie Caskey (HDR)

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

390 Robert St N St Paul, MN 55101; Conference Room 1A

## Welcome and Introductions

Molly Stewart started the meeting by sharing the goals and expectations for the meeting. The goals of the meeting are to facilitate discussion and narrow down options rather than make a final decision on the solicitation base structure.

## Decision Point #1: Select preferred solicitation structure by October-December 2024

Molly recapped the July meeting which focused on dual and centralized solicitation models. Members came to consensus supporting the centralized model (existing) at the meeting. An update on the peer MPO review was also provided. Follow-up documentation on the peer review interviews was shared with policymakers prior to this meeting.

Today's discussion focuses on developing preferred structure that incorporates Imagine 2050 and 2050 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) goals, objectives, and policies.

## Solicitation Base Structure Options

Steve Peterson started the discussion of base structure options by asking questions for members to think about over the course of the meeting: What are the advantages or disadvantages of including goals and objectives at the various structure levels? Do you have a preferred approach?

Working group members were presented with three options to consider for incorporating goals and objectives at different levels of the solicitation structure:

- Level one: Application group and funding allocations.
- Level two: Application categories.
- Level three: scoring criteria, measures, and requirements.

The 2050 goals and objectives fit into the three existing levels in various ways. Goals and objectives that are applicable to all project types could become application groups in level one. At level two, some goal and objectives could be application categories (e.g. roadway safety or transit or vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction). Or at level three, goals and objectives could be incorporated as criteria and measures to evaluate projects. The current regional solicitation structure incorporates goals and objectives at level three.

### *Discussion*

Members discussed what it would mean to incorporate goals and objectives at levels one or two. The question was raised of how to we make sure that various project types are included, and application groups are too narrow based on the goals and objectives.

Using the goals and objectives at level one (and two) draws a clear connection between the project and what the goals are seeking to achieve. It makes it easier to know if one goal is funding more projects than another and funding targets can be set by goal area. It was noted that the project seeking funding would have to identify which goal the project is aiming to advance as a primary focus (e.g. safety).

Members discussed how changing the criteria and measures to include the goals and objectives (level three) could be difficult if they require quantitative measures. These might more strongly support projects where there is more density, throwing off regional balance. Some exceptions (A-minor rule) have been introduced and could continue to be used to combat the bias. While application scoring can lend favorably to dense areas, that may be intentional. Development happens where we want more to be built, rather than in sprawled areas. It could be considered responsive to the plan rather than biased toward dense parts of the region. Ultimately, it can be asked where and how investments happen to align with TPP goals and what kinds of projects does the regional solicitation support.

Member Giesler noted that federal money is being spread across too many projects right now. It might be more effective to use federal money to impact several key regional areas and then use state dollars to fund local and smaller projects.

Member Holberg noted that the TPP is more focused on bike/ped and transit and doesn't address state of the system projects. The goals of the collar counties is not necessarily reflected in the TPP.

Chair Hovland noted that the 2050 TPP doesn't necessarily seem to focus on this population growth and economic development. How would investment via the Regional Solicitation support growing populace if it is so closely aligned with the goals and objectives of the TPP? When considering where the growth will occur, regional cooperation and understanding of goals will be important. Focusing on density is not about leaving out people or places. How do the goals connect to help us provide resources to everyone?

Another concern raised with basing different levels of the regional solicitation structure off the TPP is that the goals don't consider all transportation modes. Members are concerned that there is a disproportionately large focus on transit and bike/ped. Big picture development patterns need to be served and be directed by region-wide transportation options. Additionally, some members were concerned that if projects in the collar counties aren't funded then more development would happen further outside the region where land is cheaper, increasing the sprawl of development.

### *Example Level 1 – Application Groups Focus on Goals/Objectives*

Steve Peterson presented examples of goals/objectives in different levels for peers to guide discussion back to the structure of the regional solicitation. Specifically, this covered level 1. Moving from modal to goals-based groups is helpful so that projects that focus primarily on roadway redevelopment wouldn't end up getting the pot of bike/ped funding if the project had some sidewalk or trail element. The cons to

incorporating goals at this level are that it is big picture, and it would be difficult to set funding levels in a clear-cut manner.

Member Giesler noted that we need to stop thinking modal as many projects are multimodal in nature.

Member Ulrich noted that he likes that projects submitted currently have to address all goal areas.

It was noted that there's a desire in the group to focus on what we want to get out of the solicitation, but not how. How would this process best be structured to get to the desired outcome? If safety is a highly desired goal, where should it be highlighted – level 1, 2, or 3? Or is the desired outcome to invest in projects that respond to all goals or try to respond to all goal equally across the solicitation?

Steve Peterson continued with the presentation and noted that no one project will address everything. Applicants can be asked how they address each and it's ok if they do nothing for some, but they should address more than one. The application should also account for cases where a project adversely affects a goal? Goals that we want all projects to address should be framed as requirements and not a scoring measures, or groups or categories.

Member Giesler noted that some projects might not address all goal areas as some goal areas aren't the focus of the project.

Member Carter noted that any negative impacts a project has on goal areas should be quantified. Projects that have a negative impact shouldn't be funded.

Concern was raised over the use of quantitative measures for decision making. In the past project have not looked at goals early enough. First focus on what the project is (modal). A project that is very good at achieving goals for its region won't score as well as a project that just does better numbers wise Without quantitative measure through how do we know if the investments are achieving the goals? How to measure outcomes against quantitative project goals? (especially for legislative funded projects?)

Member Goettel inquired about how we measure the outcomes of the solicitation program and determine if goals were achieved?

Member Martinson noted that science and a strong technical process should guide the project selection process. Need to focus on how to address VMT reduction.

Member Johnson noted that incorporating the TPP goals at level 1 or 2 is more transparent and provides a better connection. The current process which incorporates TPP goals at level 3 is hard to show the connection and is more diluted. Also noted that having the solicitation by modes as it currently is, is not useful.

Member Holberg noted that it is important to have geographic balance and a simpler application process.

Member Goettel noted that it is important to have geographic balance and a solicitation program that will address end of life or state of good repair projects.

Member Sahebjam noted that incorporating the TPP goals at level 1 would allow better explanation to the public on the benefits of the program.

Complete consensus over which level to include goals and objectives was not met; however, level one received some vocal support from working group members. Generally working group members wanted to see more detail of what an application structure would look like with the TPP goals incorporated at level 1.

The project team will develop options for the application structure if the TPP goals are incorporated at level 1 and present options at the working group meeting in November.

**Next Steps**

Policymaker Working Group next meeting - November 20, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at Metropolitan Council

Policymaker Workshop for TAB and Council Members – December 18, 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. at US Bank Center (Next to Metropolitan Council)

TAB meeting – February – Action item for a base structure recommendation

<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Develop scenarios of goal and objectives incorporated at Levels 1.	November 20