



# Polycymaker Working Group

[metro council.org](http://metro council.org)



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# Policymaker Working Group



# Role of the Policymaker Working Group

## The Policymaker Working Group will...

- Regularly and actively provide policy direction to the project team throughout the evaluation.
- Make recommendations to the TAB and Council.
- Provide direction to the Technical Steering Committee and Special Issue Working Groups (including which Special Working Groups to form).



# Regional Solicitation Background & Current Process



# Regional Solicitation

## What is the Regional Solicitation?

- The Regional Solicitation is a **competitive process** to award federal transportation funding to projects that **address regional transportation needs**.
- Part of the Metropolitan Council's **federally required continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process** for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.
- Since 1993 and approximately **every two years** thereafter, the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), with the assistance of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), solicits, evaluates, ranks, and recommends projects.
- Through the 2013 Solicitation, the application categories were set up by funding sources and project category.
- Since 2014 the application categories have been modally-based.

# Regional Solicitation

## What is the Regional Solicitation? (cont.)

- Evaluation of Regional Solicitation occurred 2012-2013
- Revised structure and funding allocation beginning with 2014 Regional Solicitation
- Applications are grouped into **three primary modal categories, plus Unique Projects:**

**1. Roadways  
Including  
Multimodal  
Elements**

**2. Transit and Travel  
Demand Management  
(TDM) Projects**

**3. Bicycle and  
Pedestrian  
Facilities**

# Regional Solicitation

## 13 Funding Categories



*Roadways Including Multimodal Elements*

1. Traffic Management Technologies
2. Spot Mobility and Safety
3. Strategic Capacity
4. Roadway Reconstruction/Modernization
5. Bridges



*Transit and Travel Demand Management (TDM) Projects*

6. Transit Expansion
7. Transit Modernization
8. Travel Demand Management
9. Arterial BRT



*Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities*

10. Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities
11. Pedestrian Facilities
12. Safe Routes to School (Infrastructure)



13. Unique Projects, including the regional travel behavior inventory/modeling program



# Regional Solicitation

## How is the Regional Solicitation Funded?

The Council receives \$125M/per year of federal funding as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization. Project selection is delegated to the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) to comply with federal requirements.

- **Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) \$67M/year**- Provides flexible funding to *states and localities for projects to preserve and improve...any Federal-aid highway, public bridge and tunnel projects, ped and bike infrastructure, and transit capital projects.*
- **Transportation Alternatives (TA) \$14M/year** - A set aside of the STBG, these funds are *dedicated to smaller-scale projects including, but not limited to, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, and SRTS.*
- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) \$33M/year** - *Provides a flexible funding source to State and local governments for transportation projects and programs to help meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act.*
- **Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) \$4M/year**- Provides funding to improve surface transportation's resiliency to *natural hazards through support of planning activities, resilience improvements, community resilience and evacuation routes, and at-risk costal infrastructure.*
- **Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) \$7M/year**- *Provides funds for projects designed to reduce transportation emissions, defined as carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from on-road highway sources.*

# Federal Legislative Language Review

## Federal Rules

- Projects must be selected by the MPO Board
  - Must be a competitive process (TA and CMAQ)
- Must align with the Transportation Policy Plan (2050 TPP)
- Selected projects must be shown in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Selection process must involve other stakeholders and the public (including traditionally underserved and underrepresented populations)



# Peer Review Summary



# MPO Peer review process

## Desktop review phase

- Reviewed federal funding distribution process from 18 peer MPO regions.
- Selected based on past review, similar size, similar issues/challenges, reputation for good planning/process.
- Looked at information publicly available online.
- Focused on understanding solicitation structure, funding distribution model, alignment with regional priorities, and funding sources.
- Will inform selection of peer agencies to interview.

## Interview phase

- Will include in-depth, one-on-one interviews with five MPO peer regions.
- Focus of interviews TBD based on input.

# Peer regions reviewed

MPO	Location	Population (2010)
Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)	Denver, CO	2,827,082
Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)	San Francisco, CA	7,150,828
Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)	Seattle, WA	3,690,866
Atlanta Regional Commission	Atlanta, GA	4,819,026
Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)	Detroit, MI	4,703,593
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning	Chicago, IL	8,294,677
North Carolina Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)	Raleigh, NC	1,071,012
Metro Portland	Portland, OR	1,499,844
New York Metropolitan Transportation Commission (NYMTC)	New York, NY	12,367,508

MPO	Location	Population (2010)
Mid-America Regional Council	Kansas City, MO	1,044,989
Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments	Cincinnati, OH	1,999,474
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission	Columbus, OH	1,426,183
Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization	Austin, TX	1,759,122
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission	Philadelphia, PA	5,626,318
North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)	Dallas, TX	6,417,630
East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG COG)	St. Louis, MO	2,571,253
Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BALTOMETRO)	Baltimore, MD	2,662,204
Broward MPO	Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,900,000

# Initial themes

## Approaches to scoring and prioritization

- All regions balance between quantitative assessments and deliberative processes, to varying degrees.
  - Quantitative: objective criteria for project evaluation.
  - Deliberative: emphasizes stakeholder discussions and consensus.

## Funding process

- Dual-model approach gaining traction: regional projects and subregional/localize projects.
- Key decisions include fund allocation between regional and subregional projects within subregions.
- Process and parameters need to be defined by the MPO.

# Initial themes

## Emergence of set-asides

- Trend towards specific project type set-asides (e.g., TDM programs, bicycle/pedestrian projects).
- Examples include Puget Sound Regional Council's equity and rural corridor set-asides.

## Summary of observations

- Metropolitan Council's procedure noted for its complexity and sophistication in project selection.
  - Emphasis on a justifiable approach that aligns with regional objectives.

# Initial themes

## Limitations and challenges

- Challenges understanding back-end platforms, resulting project lists, and monetary amounts within MPO models through desktop review.
  - Suggested follow-up interviews to explore these dimensions further.

## Recommendations for future analysis

- Gain deeper insights through follow-up interviews with select MPOs.
  - Specifically, gather data about process outcomes, such as characteristics of projects selected, to better understanding the role of funding distribution structures.



# Polycymaker Working Group Discussion

## Questions for discussion

- What stood out to you? What matched your expectations? What surprised you?
- What would you like to learn more about?

# Interview recommendations

## Peer regions recommended for further conversation:

- **Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG):** Adoption of the dual-model process, and a shift towards a more qualitative approach in application scoring.
- **Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC):** Streamlined application process refined over several recent calls for projects.
- **Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC):** Set-aside programs, particularly for equity and rural areas, implementing targeted funding streams to address unique regional needs.
- **Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC):** Three-step project evaluation process, which offers a framework for integrating different project evaluation methodologies.
- **Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG):** Process that involves integrating plan development with project selection.
- **Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP):** Introducing need-based prioritization to a dual-model process.



# Regional Solicitation Evaluation Process



# Evaluation purpose, goals, timeline

## Stakeholder Groups, Public Engagement, Equity Engagement

### Decision Point 1: Preferred Solicitation Structure Fall 2023 – Fall 2024

- 10-Year summary
- MPO peer review
- Develop solicitation structure that incorporates Imagine 2050 & 2050 TPP goals and objectives
- Listening sessions
- Active Transportation working group meetings

**Deliverable: Identify preferred solicitation structure**

### Decision Point 2: Application Categories and Criteria Fall 2024 – Spring 2025

- Identify application categories
- Develop prioritizing criteria
- Identify best way to incorporate new federal funding sources
- Special issue working group meetings

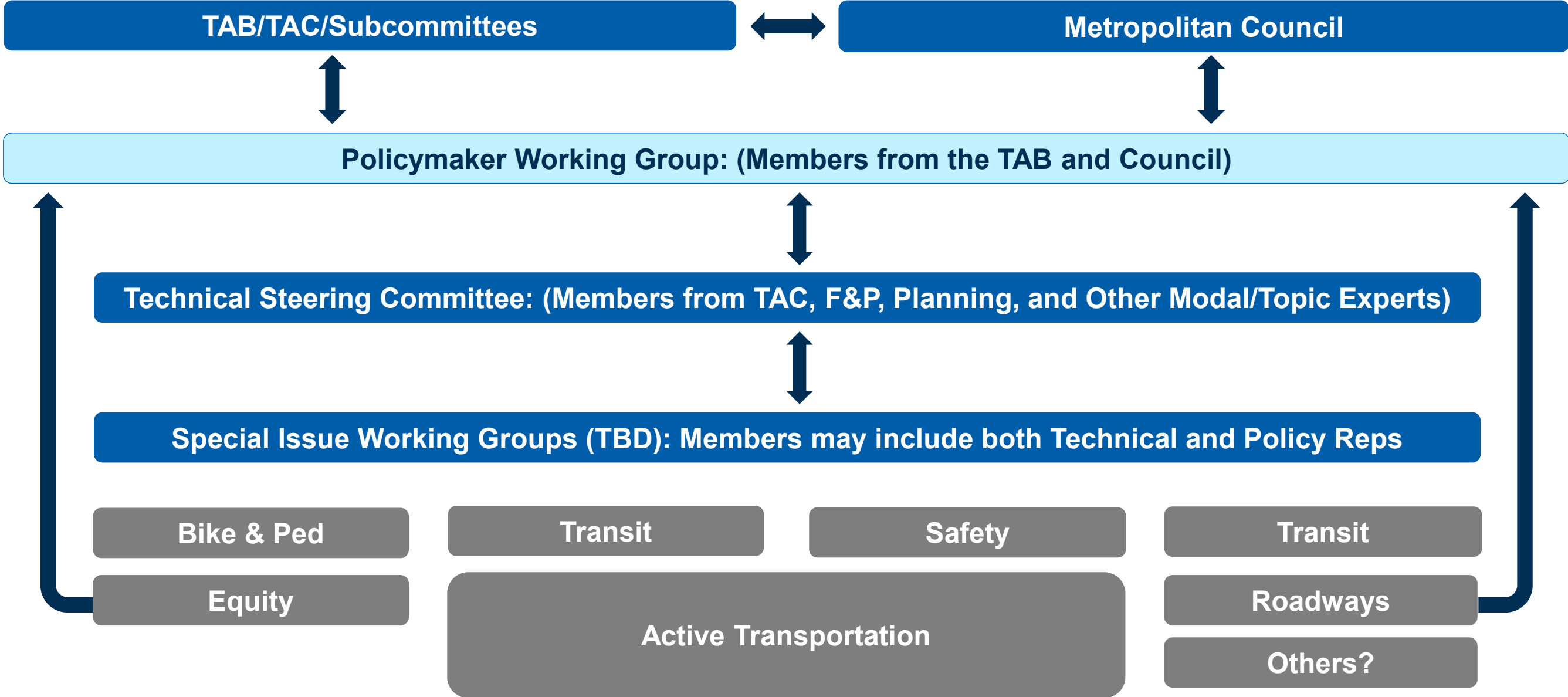
### Decision Point 3: Simplified Application Spring 2025 – Fall 2025

- Simplify application process
- Incorporate TPP performance measures
- Implement changes to application process
- Special issue working group meetings

### Decision Point 4: Final Application Materials Fall 2025 – Winter 2026

- Final application package
- Final report
- Online testing of application
- Recommend any changes to the 2050 TPP

# Decision-making Process



# Committee Structure

## Committees and roles:

**TAB/TAC/Subcommittees**—TAB is the decision-maker of the Regional Solicitation process with input from TAC and subcommittees.

**Metropolitan Council**—concurs or sends back TAB decisions.

**Policymaker Working Group**—provide policy direction to the project team; recommend decisions to TAB.

**Technical Steering Committee**—provide technical direction to the project team; recommend technical decisions to the Policy Working Group.

**Special issue working groups**—dive deep into specific areas of discussion (e.g., modes, topics, funding sources); recommend direction to the Technical Steering Committee and Policy Working Group.

# Evaluation Goals

## Group discussion over the next several months:

- What goals do you want to achieve from the next Regional Solicitation process?
- What do outcomes look like as a result of those goals?



# Decision Point #1





# Decision Point #1

## Goal: Select Preferred Structure for Regional Solicitation

April	June	August	October
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current structure</li> <li>• Role of working group</li> <li>• Introduce structure elements</li> <li>• Peer review desktop findings</li> <li>• Initial listening session feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final listening session feedback</li> <li>• Peer review interview findings</li> <li>• Discuss structure elements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review structure options</li> <li>• Refine/recommend one or two structure approaches</li> <li>• Set agenda for policymaker workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine recommendation on preferred structure for TAB to consider</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which peer review interviews to complete?</b></p>	<p><b>What structure elements like/dislike?</b></p>	<p><b>Narrow down list of structure options.</b></p>	<p><b>Recommend a preferred structure for TAB to consider.</b></p>

# June Meeting Prep

## Today's focus

- Introduce and describe the structure elements.
- Frame the current solicitation within the elements.
- Highlight initial themes from the listening sessions related to the elements.
- Highlight initial takeaways from peer review related to the elements.
- Answer questions and seek input on what more you want to know

## June meeting focus

- Highlight full listening session themes related to the elements.
- Highlight peer review interview themes related to these elements.
- Discuss the pros/cons and funding implications of each element.
- **Seeking Working Group direction:** identify what to carry forward from each dimension into structure options.



# Solicitation Structure Elements

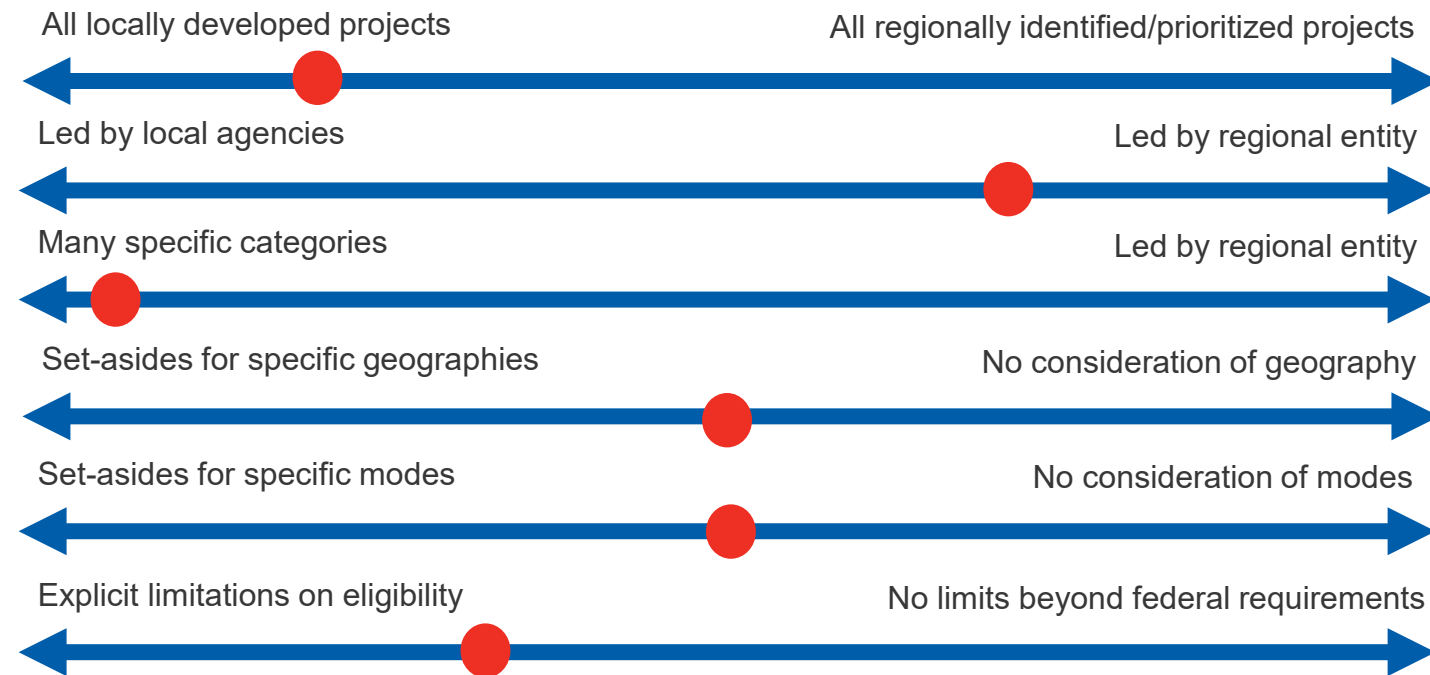


# Solicitation Structure Elements

● Current solicitation

## Elements for discussion/decision:

- Project identification/prioritization.
- Project selection recommendations.
- Application categories.
- Geographic distribution.
- Modal distribution.
- Project eligibility.



These dimensions can be combined in different ways to create an overall application structure. While each can generally be considered on its own, there may be interdependences between decisions across dimensions.



# Listening Session Themes Summary



# Engagement plan

## Audiences

- Decision-makers
- Collaborators
- Tribal nations
- Other involved stakeholders
- Community groups

## Tactics

- Policymaker presentations
- Technical steering committee
- Stakeholder groups
- Listening sessions
- Surveys
- Workshops
- Virtual communications
- Communications campaign
- Pop-up events
- Equity focused stakeholder groups

# Listen session overview

## Goals for the listening sessions

- Introduce stakeholders to the evaluation process and ways to get involved.
- Hear from stakeholders about:
  - What's working with the current solicitation.
  - What are challenges with the current solicitation.
  - What they'd like to see moving forward related to solicitation structure and outcomes.
- Inform decision point 1—application structure.
- Provide insights to inform future decision points.

# Listening session audiences

## Stakeholders

- County staff and policymakers
- City staff and policymakers
- TAB citizen and modal representatives
- MnDOT CO, Metro, and State Aid
- U of M
- Metropolitan Airports Commission
- Suburban transit providers
- Metro Transit
- Non-profits and advocacy groups
- Park boards
- Department of Natural Resources
- Travel demand management organizations
- Consultants



# Discussion themes

## Initial themes from listening sessions...

### Project identification/prioritization

- Generally, people like more locally driven projects, especially for TDM and bike/ped.
- Some openness for more regionally driven projects for transit, complex roadway corridors/projects.
- Split views related to current ABRT set-aside.

### Project selection recommendations

- People note that the current process is open and transparent.
- General sense that the region has a good process and funds quality projects in the end.
- People appreciate there being a space for deliberation in decision-making.

### Application categories

- TDM doesn't fit well within the current structure—the projects and players are too different from other categories.
- Some sense that certain types of projects should only compete with each other (e.g., truck highway mobility).
- General support for modal categories, with some interest in exploring project type categories or topic categories.

# Discussion themes

## Initial themes from listening sessions...

### Geographic distribution

- General support for some level of geographic balance, but limited support for a full set-aside.
- Much dissatisfaction with bike/ped geographic balance—most support for scoring applicants against similar geographies in this category.

### Modal distribution

- General support for some level of modal balance—people like making sure all modes get something.
- Some sense that modal balance should be more reflective of policy priorities.

### Project eligibility

- General support for a maximum award, but variation on what it should be.
- Some interest in a minimum award amount because of administrative load of federal funding—desire to have the region swap funds to limit federalize projects.

# Discussion themes

## Initial themes from listening sessions...

### Other topics

- Sense that the application and selection process is too complicated, but people also appreciate that it is data-driven and transparent.
- Feedback that the cost/level of effort to complete an application is limiting—desire to streamline structure but not lose data-driven and transparent process.
- A lot of feedback on specific metrics/scoring within each category, especially for bike/ped and transit.



# Closing Thoughts?



# Next Steps



## Next Steps:

1. Finish listening sessions
2. Complete peer review interviews
3. Technical Steering Committee meeting – May 17
4. Policymaker Working Group meeting – June and August
  - Thursday June 20, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.?
  - Thursday August 15

## Things to think about for June Meeting:

- What changes to the elements of the Regional Solicitation do you want to see or not see?
- What other information do you need to make a recommendation on a preferred solicitation structure?

# Thank You

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