



POLICYMAKER WORKING GROUP REGIONAL SOLICITATION

July 16, 2025

Working Group Attendees:

James Hovland; Deb Barber; Glen Johnson; Peter Dugan; Khani Sahebjam; Mary Liz Holberg; Brian Martinson; Debbie Goettel; Victor Lake; Reva Chamblis.

Other Attendees:

Steve Peterson, Elaine Koutsoukos, Charles Carlson, Joe Barbeau, Bethany Brandt-Sargent, Cole Hiniker, Amy Vennewitz, Robbie King, Joe Widing, Wendy Duren (Met Council); Molly Stewart, Lydia Statz (SRF Consulting Group); Paul Oehme (Lakeville); Joe McPherson (Anoka County); Molly McCartney (MnDOT); Lyssa Leitner (Washington County); Nick Thompson (Metro Transit).

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

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

Special Issue Working Group Recap

Molly Stewart shared a recap of the Special Issue Working Group Process. The seven working groups each met for two intensive workshops, with some groups having additional meetings. About 100 people (mostly technical staff from local agencies) were involved throughout the seven groups.

Structure Updates

The group then reviewed changes to the application structure that were made since the group last convened in February. Stewart noted that three application categories have been developed to distribute active transportation sales tax funding, and that the Active Transportation Work Group meeting on July 25 may provide more direction to those categories.

Community Considerations

Community Considerations (which responds to the Equitable and Inclusive goal) was not developed into a specific category but will be a common criterion used to evaluate equity across all projects/categories. Amy Vennewitz noted the Community Considerations group is looking for ways to set up a guarantee for the highest scoring projects for this criterion so that they would have a higher chance of being funded. The group does not have a recommendation finalized yet. She emphasized that most high-scoring projects would likely be funded anyway, so the guarantee would probably apply to very few projects. Vennewitz noted that the Policymaker Working Group will have a chance to review recommendations before they are sent to the Transportation Advisory Board.

Congestion Management Strategies

The group then reviewed changes to the Congestion Management Strategies application. Member Martinson expressed concern over the name of the category, saying it seems disingenuous if the category is focused mainly on roadway expansion. The group later discussed the category's purpose, including that projects will partly be scored on how well they align with the Met Council's Congestion Management Plan, which emphasizes lower cost strategies before expansions.

Arterial Bus Rapid Transit

The group also discussed the Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ABRT) category and whether to continue it as a non-competitive category or develop a competitive process. The Technical Steering Committee made the recommendation to continue the process as-is for now since no other transit agencies have potential projects at this time. It was also recommended to revisit the process in future years if any potential projects arise.

Interchanges

Stewart then gave an overview of the new Interchanges category, which seeks to fund one larger interchange project (\$20 million maximum currently proposed) rather than several smaller. This category will advance the priorities of the Met Council's Intersection Mobility and Safety Study which seeks to fund high priority interchanges. Funding a smaller number of interchange projects at a higher funding amount may also help the region meet its greenhouse gas (GHG) and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction goals by minimizing the impacts of multiple major roadway projects. The group discussed the Intersection Mobility and Safety Study, which prioritized every existing intersection in the region to put together a ranked list of priorities. The list will be revisited frequently to ensure it represents current priorities.

Joe MacPherson noted that Anoka County is supportive of this category and has some projects that may be future contenders. He noted that as a future consideration, agencies will need to discuss who the applicant will be especially when that differs from the agency with jurisdiction over the roadway(s). Molly McCartney noted that MnDOT would prefer if the local agency is the applicant when a MnDOT trunk highway project is submitted.

Lyssa Leitner expressed support of the category and the larger funding cap, noting that most current projects are too large for the current maximum (\$10 million) and that local agencies have a harder time putting together funding as multiple sources are typically needed. She said the larger maximum being considered for the category provides the ability for regional money to fund regional priorities, as noted in the Transportation Policy Plan.

There was general consensus from the group in support of the Interchange category as it was presented.

Member Holberg asked if there was any consideration for allowing roadway projects to apply for the pedestrian or ADA portions of a larger roadway project in the Active Transportation categories. Met Council staff said there has been no discussion to-date, but that doing so may be complicated given federal and Council requirements. Elaine Koutsoukos noted that projects can only be funded in one category.

Funding Minimums and Maximums

The group discussed the recommendations for updated project minimums and maximums. Most categories have been updated to have higher maximum awards than the previous project cycle. Member Barber noted that she supports the increase in funding maximums due to higher project costs.

The group specifically discussed the proposed maximum for the ABRT category, which is proposed to increase from \$25 million to \$35 million. Member Goettel noted that costs have gone up, but that's true of every project, so the maximums should be increasing everywhere. Member Barber said she supports an increased maximum, because it will allow this category to continue to be impactful.

Nick Thompson from Metro Transit provided some background on Metro Transit planning and the ABRT program, and said the J, K and L lines will be identified by the end of the year. Member Barber proposed a compromise to increase the maximum to \$30 million.

The group did not come to a consensus but will discuss as part of the funding scenarios in future meetings.

Geographic Balance

Steve Peterson presented slides on options to ensure geographic balance for the program, including background slides on current practices that promote balance. The group discussed how to ensure balance for the regional sales tax funding primarily.

Member Barber said she supports promoting geographic balance based on the 2050 community designations as proposed. She noted that since the money comes from a regional sales tax it should be distributed throughout the region. Some rural communities also don't have planners, so she would support a guarantee for those communities. Member Goettel said if the category guarantees funding to different types of communities, the group should compare the potential funding range to potential project costs in different areas to ensure funding is adequate.

Member Martinson said he supports a wait and see approach. He said the region should be thinking about how transportation investments can support densification instead of supporting sprawl.

Member Johnson noted the Active Transportation Work Group has been discussing this, and realized that 2028 may require a little bit of an overhaul since it's difficult to predict the 2026 cycle with no historic data.

The group provided no recommendation at this time.

Next Steps

The next meeting will focus on discussion of potential funding scenarios for the Regional Solicitation program. That discussion will likely take place over multiple meetings. The draft application materials are moving through review by technical staff and stakeholders and will be available for review by policymakers later this fall.

The next Policymaker Working Group meeting is scheduled for August 20.