

Special Issue Working Group Kick-off

Regional Solicitation Evaluation
metro council.org



April 2025



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Introductions



Share with the group

- Your name
- Organization
- What are one or two issues that you want to discuss as part of this work group?

Regional Solicitation Evaluation Background



Regional Solicitation

What is the Regional Solicitation?

- The Regional Solicitation is a **competitive process** to award federal transportation funding to projects that **meet regional transportation needs**.
- Part of the Metropolitan Council's **federally required continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process** for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.
- In 2024, applications were 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

- 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.

Project Overview

Regional Solicitation Evaluation

- Comprehensive evaluation of the Regional Solicitation process, completed every 10 years
- Overall goal is to align the allocation of the region's federal transportation funds through the Regional Solicitation project selection process to help achieve **the goals, objectives, and policies** of the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) and Imagine 2050.
- Current modal structure incorporates the 2040 TPP goals, objectives, and policies at the measure level, which can lead to a more complicated application without clear ties to outcomes

2050 TPP Goals

Equitable
and Inclusive

Healthy and
Safe

Dynamic and
Resilient

Climate
Change

Natural
Systems

Evaluation Decisions Timeline

Stakeholder Groups, Public Engagement, Equity Engagement

Decision Point 1: Preferred Solicitation Base Structure and Draft Application Categories	Decision Point 2: Eligible Projects and Concept Criteria	Decision Point 3: Simplified Application	Decision Point 4: Final Application Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-Year summary of investments Listening sessions MPO peer review Develop solicitation structure that incorporates Imagine 2050 & 2050 TPP goals, objectives, and policies* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify qualifying project types Develop high-level criteria (what do we want to measure?) Identify best way to incorporate new funding sources Commence special issue working group meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop detailed criteria and scoring measures (TSC and special issue working group) Develop funding ranges Implement changes to application process Develop application documents and draft for public review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final application package Final report Online testing of application Recommend any changes to the 2050 TPP
<u>TAB discussion April 16</u>	<u>February – May 2025</u>	<u>June – August 2025</u>	<u>Fall 2025</u>

*See this link for 2050 TPP goals, objectives and policies

<https://metro council.org/Transportation/Planning-2/Key-Transportation-Planning-Documents/Transportation-Policy-Plan/TPP-Goals-Objectives-Policies.aspx>

Proposed Modal+ Hybrid Structure

Safety

Proactive Safety (All Modes):

Small Projects (HSIP)
Large Project
(Reg Sol Federal
Funding)

Reactive Safety (All Modes):

Small Projects (HSIP)
Large Projects
(Reg Sol Federal
Funding)

Dynamic and Resilient

Bicycle/Pedestrian

Regional (RBTN and
Grade Separated
Barriers)

Local Bike Network
Gaps and Barriers

Local Pedestrian
Network Connections

Non-Infrastructure

Transit

Transit Expansion
(Including
Microtransit)

Arterial Bus Rapid
Transit

Transit Customer
Experience

Roadway

Roadway
Modernization

Reliability/
Excessive Delays

Bridges/System
Resiliency

Environment

EV Charging
Infrastructure

TDM

Stormwater
Improvements &
Flood Mitigation

Regional Data

Regional Modeling/Travel Behavior Inventory

What We've Heard - General

Feedback from Technical Stakeholders

- Applications should be simplified to focus on one goal or desired outcome, rather than multiple
 - Example: Safety projects should be required to focus mainly on safety-related criteria
- Some criteria, such as equity and greenhouse gas reduction, may be applied across multiple categories
- Make the application easier to complete

What We've Heard—TDM

Listening Sessions

- Desire for TDM to be scored separately from other infrastructure projects
- Challenges scoring TDM projects with infrastructure against those without
- Desire among TMOs to fund smaller, locally driven projects
- Desire among TMOs to prioritize equity in project selection
- TMOs expressed concern that complexity and schedule of the solicitation doesn't work well for their projects

Equity Engagement

- Audiences engaged were primarily concerned with safety and accessibility

What We've Heard—Roadways

Listening Sessions

- Desire to fund larger, more complex roadway projects
- Desire to increase max award for roadway projects
- Mixed feedback on whether projects should be limited to certain types of roadways (e.g., functional classification)
- Some desire to see population growth factored more into project selection
- Note that freight is not currently incorporated well in selection
- Some desire to focus funding on improving geometrics
- Some desire to address green infrastructure on roadway projects

Equity Engagement

- Driver prefer traveling on quieter and less complex roads

What We've Heard— Climate Change/GHG/EV

Listening Sessions

- Some desire to see funding prioritized for climate goals and to see climate goals advanced via all or most projects
- Some unease with the technical details of evaluating VMT and GHG reduction for different types of projects
- Some unease with VMT reduction goals, especially in growing communities
- Note that equity is an important consideration in VMT reduction discussions

Equity Engagement

- Audiences engaged were primarily concerned with safety and accessibility over the environment

What We've Heard—Bike/Ped

Listening Sessions

- Perception that suburban and rural applicants have a difficulty competing due to focus on density and employment characteristics
- Desire to keep specific application categories to make comparing projects either (rather than one large active transportation category)

Equity Engagement

- Much discussion focused on intersection safety
- Transportation facilities that are separated by travel mode make people feel safer.
- Active transportation facilities are valued for both transportation and health reasons
- Lower-income communities need pedestrian and bicycle-focused infrastructure for travel, as well as health reasons.

What We've Heard—Bike/Ped (cont'd)

Special Direction

- 2023 Regional Sales Tax provides dedicated funding source for active transportation projects
- TAB created a work group to identify use and process for this funding.
- **Work group direction:**
 - Incorporate Safe Routes to School projects into scoring of another bike/ped category
 - Add non-infrastructure bike/ped application category (planning, quick build/demo projects)- special issue working group can help with details

Bicycle/Pedestrian

Regional (RBTN and Grade Separated Barriers)

Local Bike Network Gaps and Barriers

Local Pedestrian Network Connections

Non-Infrastructure

What We've Heard—Transit

Listening Sessions

- Desire to see microtransit funded
- Mixed feedback on if ABRT set-aside or other regionally prioritized projects should be continued
- Split feedback on whether there should be geographic considerations
- Desire to see bus garages/facilities funded
- Suggestion to add school bus fleets to eligible projects
- Mixed feedback on whether to focus on larger projects compared to more, smaller projects
- Note that projects that connect people to the transit system are important
- Desire to see more collaboration among applicants

Equity Engagement

- Develop comprehensive transit networks that minimize service gaps
- Improve transit stop amenities with comfort-focused features
- Increase bus frequency and reduce service delays
- Provide clear, accessible route information
- Create diverse transit services that meet varied community needs

What We've Heard—Safety

Listening Sessions

- Desire to improve safety outcomes from the solicitation
- Desire to see safety advanced by all projects
- Safety is a high priority for all
- Note that freight safety is not well considered
- Desire to fund proactive and reactive safety projects
- Need clarity on what is a "safety" project

Equity Engagement

- Implement multimodal transportation designs that physically separate different travel modes
- Prioritize lighting improvements in transportation infrastructure
- Ensure robust snow removal and winter maintenance capabilities
- Address transit network gaps to improve safety for all users, especially youth

What We've Heard— Equity/Community Considerations

Listening Sessions

- Some desire to see equity incorporated throughout
- Some thought that more, smaller projects would better advance equity goals
- Note that certain scoring criteria/metrics can have unintended equity considerations

Equity Engagement

- Prioritize projects that extend public transit to underserved suburban and rural areas
- Include comprehensive wayfinding and educational materials with infrastructure projects
- Develop inclusive engagement strategies that reach diverse community groups
- Fund transportation solutions that go beyond minimum accessibility standards
- Support placemaking initiatives that improve community infrastructure aesthetics

Equity Evaluation of Regional Transportation Investment Processes

The Equity Policy Group (EPG) & Pilot Study Team



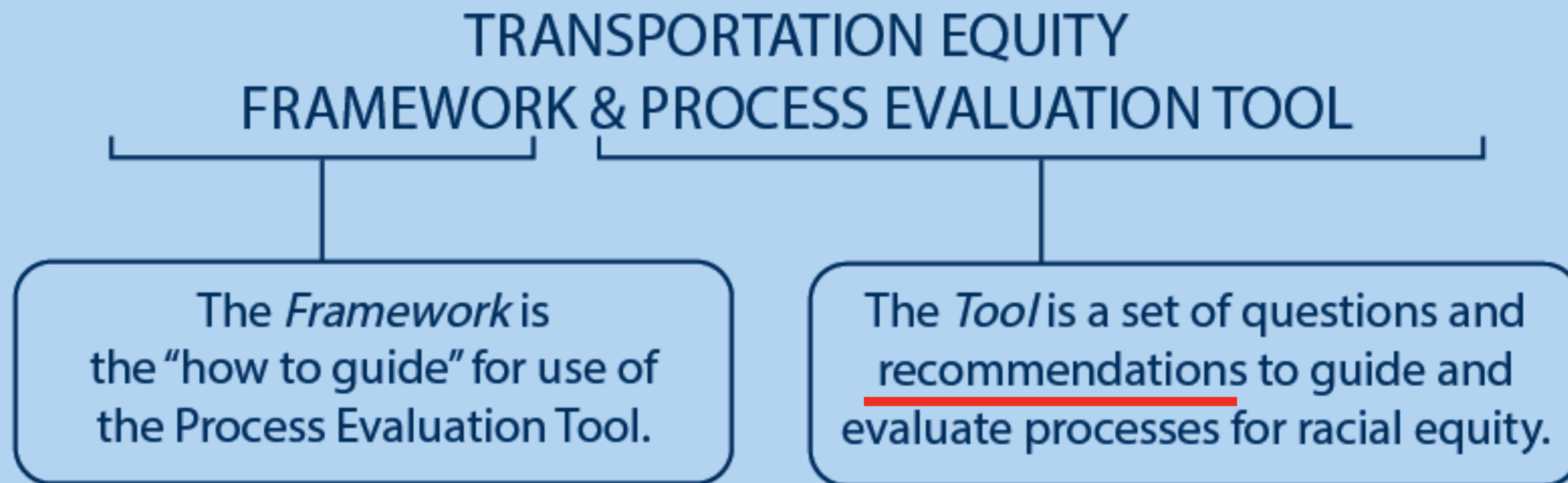
The Study Work Model



The EPG's Guiding Values



The Equity Framework & Tool



Role of the Special Issue Working Groups



Role and Structure

Technical Recommendations

For each application category, working groups will recommend:

- Eligible project types
- Scoring criteria and measures
- Potential project funding minimums and maximums
- If/how to incorporate geographic considerations within relevant application categories

Special Issue Working Groups:

Safety

Bike/Ped

Transit

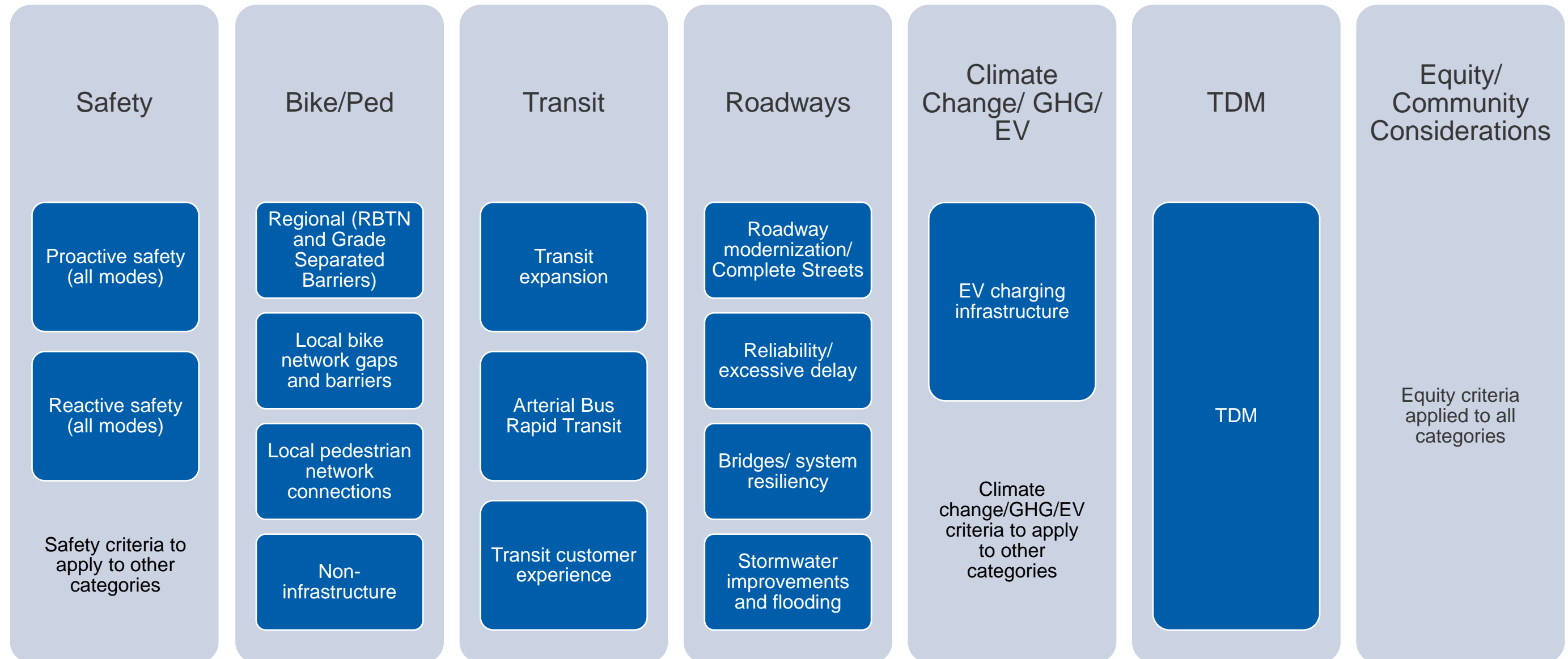
Roadway

Climate/GHG/EV

TDM

Equity/Community Considerations

Application Category Focus



*Working groups will also be able to influence criteria/measures for other categories

Discussion Break 1

Do you have any questions related to role and structure of the working group?

Overview of working group activities



Phased Approach

Phase 1

Establishment of working groups and Workshop 1

- Virtual kick-off meeting for each group
- Workshop 1
 - Consensus on criteria
 - Initial discussion on measures, eligibility requirements, min/max project award
- Technical Steering Committee and Policymaker update and feedback

Phase 2

Issue resolution and Workshop 2

- Virtual issue resolution meetings (as needed)
- Workshop 2
 - Consensus on measures, eligibility requirements, min/max project award
 - Initial discussions on scoring guidance, geographic considerations
- Technical Steering Committee and Policymaker update and feedback

Phase 3

Issue resolution and recommendations

- Virtual issue resolution meetings (as needed)
- Virtual wrap-up meeting for each group
 - Consensus on draft recommendations
- Finalize recommendations
- Steering Committee and Policymaker review

Working Group Guidance

Discussion parameters

- How projects are selected
- Project eligibility
- Scoring criteria and measures
- Points distribution
- Min/max project award
- Geographic considerations (category level)

Outside the scope of the working groups

- Funding ranges
- Geographic balance (program level)

How is this working group different?

Focus of April Workshop

- You will receive additional background ahead of workshop:
 - How equity is currently included in the solicitation
 - What we learned in the equity evaluation
- Come ready to discuss **what** we want the solicitation to incorporate as equity criteria moving forward:
 - What do you like about the old way? What isn't working?
 - What did we learn in the equity project we want to incorporate?
- Future discussion about **how** we incorporate equity criteria:
 - What equity criteria do we want to incorporate immediately? What needs to come later?
 - Should equity criteria be incorporated differently across application categories?
 - How much of project scoring should equity criteria account for?
 - Should there be equity recommendations related to qualifying requirements, project types, geographic and/or project size considerations?

Discussion Break 2

Do you have any questions related to the working group guidance?



Detailed Work Plan

Important Upcoming Dates—Phase 1

Early April – Kickoff Meeting with each group

- Follow-up survey to collect initial feedback on criteria and priorities

April 25 – Workshop 1

- Full-day agenda with morning "open house" format, and separate working group meetings
 - Proposed agenda:
 - Welcome and open house—full group (9:30 to 10:00 am)
 - Morning meetings—climate, safety, TDM, equity (10:00 am to 12:00 pm)
 - Welcome and open house—full group (12:30 pm to 1:00 pm)
 - Afternoon meetings—roadway, transit, bike/ped (1:00 to 3:00 pm)
- Develop consensus on criteria and initial discussion on measures, eligibility requirements, min/max project award

Detailed Work Plan (cont.)

Important Upcoming Dates—Phase 2

Early May (TBD) – Virtual meetings

- Issue resolution meetings as needed
- May involve policymakers or technical groups as relevant

May 30 – Workshop 2

- Develop consensus on measures, eligibility requirements, min/max project award and initial discussions on scoring guidance, geographic considerations

Discussion Break 3



Do you have any questions related to the upcoming working group meetings and activities?

Next steps



Upcoming



Next steps:

1. Complete the follow-up survey
2. Relevant documents for continued reading
 - Working group guidance
 - [Listening session summary](#)
 - [Before and after study](#)
 - [Peer region summary](#)
 - [Investment summary](#)
 - Engagement summary—coming soon
3. Upcoming meetings
 - Workshop 1: April 25, 2025 (hold 9:30 am to 2:30 pm)—detailed agenda coming soon
 - Workshop 2: May 30, 2025 (hold 9:30 am to 2:30 pm)—detailed agenda ahead of meeting

Thank You

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