



TECHNICAL STEERING COMMITTEE REGIONAL SOLICITATION

February 25, 2025

Steering Committee Attendees:

Paul Oehme, Danny McCullough, Lyssa Leitner, Molly McCartney, Innocent Eyoh, Jeni Hager, Brian Isaacson, Joe MacPherson, Lydon Robjant, Jillian Linnell, Reuben Collins, Doran Cote, Chris Hartzell, Gina Mitteco, Reuben Collins, Patrick Boylan

Other Attendees:

Steve Peterson, Bethany Brandt-Sargent, Elaine Koutsoukos, Robbie King, Charles Carlson, Cole Hiniker, Joe Barbeau (Met Council) KC Atkins (Hennepin County), Molly Stewart, Lydia Statz (SRF Consulting Group)

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Online Meeting

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Paul Oehme welcomed committee members.

Steve Peterson provided an overview of the project background and process, and Molly Stewart provided an update on the project progress since the January meeting.

Structure Discussion (Molly Stewart)

Member Mitteco noted that in previous presentations, bike/ped was split out into federal and active transportation dollars and wondered why the slides shown today look different. Steve Peterson said that is still likely the intent, but the team needs to have more discussion with the work group on the intended uses for those dollars

Members Leitner recalled for the group that many of the policymakers perceived the directive to “simplify the process” as reducing project categories, whereas technical staff are ok with the number of categories but would like to see fewer criteria and measures for each category. She urged committee members to brief their policymakers so they understand

Special Issue Working Groups (Molly Stewart)

The group discussed the structure of the Special Issue Working Groups, which will be formed in the coming weeks. Members will have the opportunity to volunteer to be part of a group.

Safety Category Discussion

Member Isaacson expressed some concern about funding safety studies with federal funding. In his experience, applying federal funding to small studies presents many challenges. Member McCartney agreed but said with the uncertainty around what federal funding will be available, it might be good to keep it as an option.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Discussion

Steve Peterson noted that there have been discussions around the possibility of using the new active transportation funding for studies, which wouldn't federalize the project. Those conversations are

ongoing with the AT working group. The group also discussed whether the active transportation funding may be able to be used for engineering. This will be discussed with the special issue working groups.

Member Robjent provided feedback to be specific about what “regional” means and would there be consideration to revise the terminology to simply say its projects on the RBTN, since counties have many regional trails that are recreational.

Member MacPherson proposed the idea of combining local pedestrian and bicycle projects on one application, since they’ll likely have similar criteria. This would be one way to simplify the process.

Member Mitteco supported keeping the projects on separate applications, since scoring projects that are very different in scope or scale is very difficult. She noted it is easier to separate projects of different scales. This will likely be a topic of discussion for special issue working groups.

Transit Discussion

Steve Peterson said the working group have many questions to consider, including the possibility of providing funding for transit support facilities.

Member Eyoh noted that greenhouse gas reduction should likely be a criterion in this category, and Molly Stewart said that there will be a separate GHG special issue working group, but it’s likely this would be a criteria that is applied widely across project categories.

Roadway Discussion

Member Leitner highlighted that this category is the first that shows “connection to jobs or other destinations” as a possible criterion. She said there should be a global discussion about how to deal with this. Should it be only on this project, on others, or maybe not at all?

She also urged a discussion about the criteria related to providing multimodal facilities to determine what we should be trying to achieve with this category. Member Hager agreed, and said what is currently called “complete streets” should be called street reconstruction, since complete streets is a process, not a project type.

Member MacPherson asked about including bridges, a topic that has repeatedly come up throughout the process. Molly Stewart said the project team is trying to reframe how we’re looking at bridge projects to determine what TPP goals they advance, not funding asset management as a separate goal. Member Hager advocated for bridges to be a separate category, noting their importance expense, and that local communities are looking for help funding them. Other members agreed. The final resolution was to add bridges under the roadway (dynamic) category.

Member Mitteco was surprised not to see asset management included and asked if this reflects a policy direction. Steve Peterson said the focus of the TPP is away from asset management and stresses that asset management activities should advance other goals. Cole Hiniker agreed and said that the TPP was specifically set up to identify the goals we want to advance through regional solicitation, and asset management has not historically been a focus of the regional solicitation funding program.

Environment

The group in general discussed the current federal uncertainty regarding federal eligibility for projects related to climate change and the environment. Member Leitner said the policy group spent a lot of time debating this, and the consensus was to move forward and be flexible, understanding the potential need to pivot.

Molly Stewart noted that the proposed categories and criteria tie back to the TPP, which is adopted now.

Member Leitner agreed and said she wants to make sure we don’t stop talking about some of these topics as a region and maintain our momentum. Member Eyoh agreed that these are topics that support the region’s long-term goals. He said this is similar to several years ago and the conversations

around light rail transit projects and supported the need to continue watching how it turns out and make sure we have our own plans ready.

Regionally Prioritized Discussion

The group then discussed the options for possible project categories that would be awarded through a regional prioritization process (previously called set-asides), rather than competitive applications. Steve Peterson provided an overview of the small set of regional plans that provide sufficient prioritization guidance for project selection.

Member MacPherson said that funding interchange and intersection projects through this process could allow the funding of some of larger projects with less funding sources which would simplify things. Member McCartney noted the need to pay more attention to this with the GHG emissions work that is happening at the state level.

The group discussed whether Arterial Bus Rapid Transit is still needed but concluded that it should remain a regional priority.

Member MacPherson asked what members would think of the idea of developing a similar category for larger roadway projects. Member Leitner noted that the ABRT category has a defined project list from a regional study, which is not true of roadway projects. Member Hager also said she supports keeping these as a competitive application.

Molly Stewart said another option is to increase the maximum award, which would allow larger projects to receive funding. Several members were supportive of this approach.

Next steps (Molly Stewart)

Members are invited to volunteer for a special issue working group, which will be formed in the next few weeks. The March meeting will be canceled, with the next meeting of this group is tentatively planned for April 22. That meeting will provide an update on the working group process.

Action Item	Timeline
Volunteer for special issue working groups	Email to be send early March