



TECHNICAL STEERING COMMITTEE REGIONAL SOLICITATION

May 6, 2025

Steering Committee Attendees:

Paul Oehme, Danny McCullough, Aaron Tag, Maddie Dahlheimer, Innocent Eyoh, Jeni Hager, Lyndon Robjent, Jillian Linnell, Reuben Collins, Jim Kosluchar, Doran Cote, Chris Hartzell, Theresa Cain

Other Attendees:

Steve Peterson, Elaine Koutsoukos, Amy Vennewitz, Cole Hiniker, Joe Barbeau, Bethany Brandt-Sargent, Heidi Schallberg, Charles Carlson (Met Council), Molly McCartney (MnDOT), KC Atkins (Hennepin County), Molly Stewart, Lydia Statz (SRF Consulting Group)

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Hybrid Meeting, Metropolitan Council and Microsoft Teams

April 25 Workshop Recap

Molly Stewart and Steve Peterson provided a recap of the results of the April 25 Special Interest Working Group workshop, including some minor changes to the proposed structure. Member Oehme asked how staff feels about a proposed change to include only a single safety category that combines proactive and reactive projects. Stewart noted that MnDOT keeps the categories separated in order to distribute funding to different types of safety projects.

Member Hager noted combining the applications could make it more difficult for proactive projects to compete against reactive projects. Stewart said the group talked about that a little bit, but at a high level. Member Dahlheimer noted that it makes sense to make it one application, then make a funding allocation decision to determine how much to allocate toward proactive.

Member Robjent noted that the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) program seems to work well, so it may not make sense to make major changes to the structure. Member Tag asked how the solicitation will be different, since so much will replicate HSIP. Peterson noted that the group had discussed using this program to fund projects larger than the HSIP maximum (\$2 million). The final consensus was to keep the applications separate and mirror the HSIP program.

The group then discussed the bike/ped category and the Active Transportation Work Group's decision to allocate federal and local funding based on project category, with federal funding going to "regional" projects, and local funding going to "local" projects. The bike/ped special interest working group will be making a more detailed recommendation on how to differentiate project eligibility for the two categories.

The group noted that geographic balance has been a challenge for the multiuse trail and bicycle facilities category and hoped that the newly available local funding may help solve that challenge.

Amy Vennewitz gave an update on the equity special issue working group and noted that the group is looking at changing terminology to focus on "community considerations" to reflect a more holistic focus.

Primary/Secondary Criteria Weighting

The group discussed the potential weighting of primary and secondary criteria in the 2026 applications. Member Dahlheimer questioned the need for secondary criteria at all, noting the danger of watering down the applications with too many criteria. She also expressed a desire to ensure each criterion is simple, rather than the multi-part questions from previous applications. Vennewitz noted that one way to think about secondary criteria is a way to differentiate projects “all else being equal.”

The group debated and determined that weighting and the number of criteria may vary by group and declined to make an across the board recommendation. The group provided direction to the special issue working groups to focus the discussion on primary criteria, and the technical steering committee will provide input on secondary criteria later and will consider recommendations from the special issue working groups.

Funding Maximums

Peterson presented some information on existing funding maximums by category, as well as a history of when the maximum award levels were last changed. The group then completed a polling exercise to provide feedback on whether they felt the existing funding maximums were about right, too low or too high for each category. Generally, the group felt many existing maximums were appropriate, but the local bike networks category should be lowered (previously the maximum was \$5.5 million), the reliability/excess delay and modernization roadway categories should both be \$10 million, and the TDM category should be raised (maximum to be determined by special issue working group).

Elaine Koutsoukos asked the group whether the funding max limits influences the projects submitted. Member Collins said it definitely has for the City of Saint Paul, and that the city spends a lot of time trying to “right-size” a project.

The group also discussed creating an interchange “set-aside” similar to arterial bus rapid transit, that would be dedicated to funding 1-2 interchange projects with a higher maximum. Member Robjont noted that because of new MnDOT greenhouse gas mitigation requirements, it might be better to fund a small number of these projects, which could be offset by a higher number of active transportation or transit projects.

Member Hager noted that funding minimums and maximums are evaluated at the beginning of every cycle, so the group will have an opportunity to re-evaluate in two years.

Geographic Balance

The group discussed the geographic balance of the overall solicitation program. After reviewing statistics of funding breakdown by community, the group decided that the previous cycles generally appear to be distributed in a balanced geographic way. Most complaints have been about rural communities feeling unable to compete for bicycle and pedestrian projects, and the group noted that the additional regional sales tax funding available in the next cycle will hopefully help to address that challenge.

The group did have a discussion on whether to open eligibility to lower functional class roadways (currently limited to Minor Arterials and above) and decided to remove functional class limits on the safety category. More discussion is needed for other roadway projects.

Next Steps

- Info item on a base structure and application categories at TAB – May 21
- Special Issue Working Group Workshop #2 – May 30
- Technical Steering Committee Meeting – June 24