



TECHNICAL STEERING COMMITTEE REGIONAL SOLICITATION

May 17, 2024

Steering Committee Attendees:

Paul Oehme, Jim Kosluchar, Joe MacPherson, Innocent Eyoh, Jeni Hager, Doran Cote, Brian Isaacson, Lyssa Leitner, Kelly Grissman, Reuben Collins, Jillian Linnell, Aaron Tag, Joshua Pearson, Lyndon Robjent, Melissa Madison

Other Attendees:

Elaine Koutsoukos (Met Council), Joe Barbeau (Met Council), Cole Hiniker (Met Council), Charles Carlson (Met Council), Amy Vennewitz (Met Council), KC Atkins (Hennepin County), Molly Stewart (SRF Consulting Group), Marie Cote (SRF Consulting Group), Katie Caskey (HDR)

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Paul Oehme welcomed committee members and led introductions.

Role of the Working Group

Paul introduced the project and presented the role the committee would play in the project.

Regional Solicitation Background and Current Process

History and Current Regional Solicitation Process

Joe Barbeau presented the Regional Solicitation process as a requirement for accessing federal funding. He presented the change in 2014 from the application categories set up by funding sources and project categories, to application categories that were modal based.

Congressional Legislative Language Review for Regional Solicitation

Joe presented the legislative language rules and requirements to receive federal funding from the sources included in the Regional Solicitation. (For example, Transportation Alternatives (TA) and Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) improvement programs require a competitive process for project selection).

National MPO Peer Review Summary

Katie Caskey presented the two phases of the Peer Review – Desktop Review and Interviews. This will be used to identify how the distribution of federal funding is done in other states and what the Met Council can learn from others.

The Desktop Peer Review looked at 18 MPO regions. Peer regions in the study were selected based on past reviews, similar size, similar challenges, and reputation for solid planning/process. The desktop review looked at information available online to narrow down which regions to follow up with interviews.

Katie summarized the initial key themes resulting from the desktop review. This included the approaches to scoring and prioritization, funding process, emergence of set asides, summary of observations, limitations and challenges, and recommendations for future analysis. She mentioned that the dual-modal approach is gaining attraction with regional projects and subregional/local projects being more common. In addition, she noted that the Metropolitan Council's current procedure is complexity and more sophisticated in project selection than other peer regions.

Member Madison asked if we see complexity as a positive or a challenge. Katie responded that complexity is seen as a positive as it adds transparency to the process. However, the complexity is also seen as a challenge as it is difficult to apply.

Katie continued with the Policymaker Working Group feedback. She shared that two of the peer regions were replaced with two new ones based on their feedback to find ones seen as a similar region to the Twin Cities.

Member Leitner commented that there could be a different perspective between the MPO staff and non-MPO staff. Katie agreed to make sure we get the perspective of the applicant, partnering agencies and stakeholders during the peer interviews.

Member Eyoh asked about the type of measures they use. Katie responded that we will be asking about their applications and process.

Member Grissman commented that although it's helpful to hear what's working well, we should learn about the lessons learned and not repeat them.

Regional Solicitation Evaluation Process

Molly presented on the Regional Solicitation Evaluation process including the decision-making process and timeline.

Committee Structure

Chair Oehme presented the committee structure and each of the committee's roles on the project. He explained that the group discussion over the next several months includes what goals do you want to achieve from the next Regional Solicitation process and what do outcomes look like as a result of those goals.

Member Grissman added a comment that a goal for the next Regional Solicitation should look at geographic balance/equity not only by county but also by rural/suburban/urban designation.

Upcoming Meetings and Goals

Molly presented a timeline for upcoming meetings and decision point #1.

Solicitation Structure Elements

Molly presented the four areas to be discussed over the next few meetings as it defines our solicitation structure: project identification/prioritization, project selection recommendations, solicitation categories and set-asides.

Listening Session Summary

Katie presented the engagement plan and summary of listening sessions hosted so far.

The goals for listening sessions were to introduce the idea of the evaluation process to stakeholders and introduce ways to get involved. She shared who was involved in the listening sessions. Initial themes from the listening sessions include project identification/prioritization, project selection recommendations, solicitation categories, set-asides and other topics.

Member Kosluchar added a comment that a suggested MPO survey question: are modal categories used to assign or award funding, and if so, how are the allocations to different modal categories decided?

Member Leitner asked if comments from TAB versus staff could be separated to showcase the differences. Katie will look back to see if that is available.

Katie continued with presenting the notable differences among stakeholders: regional perspective most reflected by state and regional agencies, non-profit focus on critical environmental policy concerns, small city agency challenges with application cost and complexity, and suburban context and policy differences.

Discussion

Member Klosuchar commented that trail projects are very different within the core city versus outlying areas. There are blurred lines between a pedestrian and trail project that could be scored across categories.

Member MacPherson noted interest in defederalizing projects and raising the max award and allowing local agencies to move the money around.

Member Leitner would like to revisit the scope change policy. TAB is getting into the details on how agencies deliver the projects. We should find out what the MPOs do after the projects are selected. Especially on non-roadway projects.

Member Hager commented that the TAB is talking a lot about spending the funds on non-traditional transportation projects such as Bike Share. Are other regions doing that?

Cole Hiniker asked if other regions are funding system-wide studies, feasibility studies or exploratory work. Do they set aside funds for this?

It was noted that scope changes are necessary since we are funding projects that are four years out and are not completed designed until the funding is identified. Member Hager responded that if the project needs to be further along, it's an extra barrier we do not want to introduce.

Future Technical Steering Committee meetings were identified:

- Thursday July 25, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- Thursday September 12, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Action Item	Timeline
Schedule July and September Steering Committee Meetings.	Early June