

# Technical Steering Committee

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# Technical Steering Committee



# Role of the Technical Steering Committee

## The Technical Steering Committee will...

- Regularly and actively provide technical direction to the project team throughout the evaluation.
- Provide technical input to the Policymaker Working Group to inform their decision making.
- Respond to questions/dig into specific issues as directed by the Policymaker Working Group.



# Regional Solicitation Background & Current Process



# Regional Solicitation

## What is the Regional Solicitation?

- The Regional Solicitation is a **competitive process** to award federal transportation funding to projects that **address regional transportation needs**.
- Part of the Metropolitan Council's **federally required continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process** for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.
- Since 1993 and approximately **every two years** thereafter, the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), with the assistance of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Funding and Programming Committee, solicits, evaluates, ranks, and recommends projects.
- Through the 2013 Solicitation, the application categories were set up by funding sources and project category.
- Since 2014 the application categories have been modally-based.

# Regional Solicitation

## What is the Regional Solicitation? (cont.)

- Evaluation of Regional Solicitation occurred 2012-2014
- Revised structure and funding allocation beginning with 2014 Regional Solicitation
- Applications are 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**

# Regional Solicitation

## 13 Funding Categories



*Roadways Including Multimodal Elements*

1. Traffic Management Technologies
2. Spot Mobility and Safety
3. Strategic Capacity
4. Roadway Reconstruction/Modernization
5. Bridges



*Transit and Travel Demand Management (TDM) Projects*

6. Transit Expansion
7. Transit Modernization
8. Travel Demand Management
9. Arterial BRT



*Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities*

10. Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities
11. Pedestrian Facilities
12. Safe Routes to School (Infrastructure)



13. Unique Projects, including the regional travel behavior inventory/modeling program



# Regional Solicitation

## How is the Regional Solicitation Funded?

The Council receives \$125M/per year of federal funding as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization. Project selection is delegated to the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) to comply with federal requirements.

- **Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) \$67M/year**- Provides flexible funding to *states and localities for projects to preserve and improve...any Federal-aid highway, public bridge and tunnel projects, ped and bike infrastructure, and transit capital projects.*
- **Transportation Alternatives (TA) \$14M/year** - A set aside of the STBG, these funds are *dedicated to smaller-scale projects including, but not limited to, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, and SRTS.*
- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) \$33M/year** - *Provides a flexible funding source to State and local governments for transportation projects and programs to help meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act.*
- **Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) \$4M/year**- Provides funding to improve surface transportation's resiliency to *natural hazards through support of planning activities, resilience improvements, community resilience and evacuation routes, and at-risk coastal infrastructure.*
- **Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) \$7M/year**- *Provides funds for projects designed to reduce transportation emissions, defined as carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from on-road highway sources.*

# Federal Legislative Language Review

## Federal Rules

- Projects must be selected by the MPO Board
  - Must be a competitive process (TA and CMAQ)
- Must align with the Transportation Policy Plan (2050 TPP)
- Selected projects must be shown in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Selection process must involve other stakeholders and the public (including traditionally underserved and underrepresented populations)



# Peer Review Summary



# MPO Peer review process

## Desktop review phase

- Reviewed federal funding distribution process from 18 peer MPO regions.
- Selected based on past review, similar size, similar issues/challenges, reputation for good planning/process.
- Looked at information publicly available online.
- Focused on understanding solicitation structure, funding distribution model, alignment with regional priorities, and funding sources.
- Will inform selection of peer agencies to interview.

## Interview phase

- Will include in-depth, one-on-one interviews with five MPO peer regions.
- Focus of interviews is on what, why and how of MPO funding distribution approaches.

# Peer regions reviewed

MPO	Location	Population (2010)
Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)	Denver, CO	2,827,082
Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)	San Francisco, CA	7,150,828
Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)	Seattle, WA	3,690,866
Atlanta Regional Commission	Atlanta, GA	4,819,026
Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)	Detroit, MI	4,703,593
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning	Chicago, IL	8,294,677
North Carolina Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)	Raleigh, NC	1,071,012
Metro Portland	Portland, OR	1,499,844
New York Metropolitan Transportation Commission (NYMTC)	New York, NY	12,367,508

MPO	Location	Population (2010)
Mid-America Regional Council	Kansas City, MO	1,044,989
Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments	Cincinnati, OH	1,999,474
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission	Columbus, OH	1,426,183
Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization	Austin, TX	1,759,122
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission	Philadelphia, PA	5,626,318
North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)	Dallas, TX	6,417,630
East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG COG)	St. Louis, MO	2,571,253
Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BALTOMETRO)	Baltimore, MD	2,662,204
Broward MPO	Fort Lauderdale, FL	1,900,000

# Initial themes

## Approaches to scoring and prioritization

- All regions balance between quantitative assessments and deliberative processes, to varying degrees.
  - Quantitative: objective criteria for project evaluation.
  - Deliberative: emphasizes stakeholder discussions and consensus.

## Funding process

- Dual-model approach gaining traction: regional projects and subregional/localized projects.
- Key decisions include fund allocation between regional and subregional projects within subregions.
- Process and parameters need to be defined by the MPO.

# Initial themes

## Emergence of set-asides

- Trend towards specific project type set-asides (e.g., TDM programs, bicycle/pedestrian projects).
- Examples include Puget Sound Regional Council's equity and rural corridor set-asides.

## Summary of observations

- Metropolitan Council's procedure noted for its complexity and sophistication in project selection.
  - Emphasis on a justifiable approach that aligns with regional objectives.

# Initial themes

## Limitations and challenges

- Challenge to understanding back-end platforms, resulting project lists, and monetary amounts within MPO models through desktop review.
  - Suggested follow-up interviews to explore these dimensions further.

## Recommendations for future analysis

- Gain deeper insights through follow-up interviews with select MPOs.
  - Specifically, gather data about process outcomes, such as characteristics of projects selected, to better understanding the role of funding distribution structures.



# Policymaker Working Group Feedback

## Policymaker feedback received includes

- General concurrence on list of interviewees, with addition of regions more like the Twin Cities from a geographic standpoint.
- Ask to show how regions interviewed on similar or different from our region based on characteristics such as:
  - Population
  - Growth rate
  - Natural or policy growth restrictions
  - Governance structure
  - Number of municipalities within region
  - Level and type of funding distributed

# Interview recommendations

## Peer regions recommended for further conversation:

- **Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG):** Adoption of the dual-model process, and a shift towards a more qualitative approach in application scoring.
- **San Francisco Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC):** Streamlined application process refined over several recent calls for projects.
- **Seattle Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC):** Set-aside programs, particularly for equity and rural areas, implementing targeted funding streams to address unique regional needs.
- **Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC):** Three-step project evaluation process, which offers a framework for integrating different project evaluation methodologies.
- ~~**Detroit Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG):** Process that involves integrating plan development with project selection.~~
- ~~**Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP):** Introducing need-based prioritization to a dual-model process.~~
- **Columbus Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC):** Seen as a similar region to Twin Cities.
- **Kansas City Mid-America Regional Council (MARC):** Seen as similar region to Twin Cities.

# Draft Interview Questions

## Draft interview questions

- MPO governance and structure.
- MPO funding levels and distribution approach.
- Funding distribution connection to regional plans and policies.
- Solicitation platforms and application processes.
- Resulting project lists and evaluation.
- And more...

# TSC Discussion

## Input for peer review

- What stood out to you from the initial takeaways?
- What questions do you want to see answered about peer region funding distribution approaches?
- Feedback on proposed interview list.



# Regional Solicitation Evaluation Process



# Evaluation purpose, goals, timeline

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## Decision Point 1: Preferred Solicitation Structure Fall 2023 – Fall 2024

- 10-Year summary
- MPO peer review
- Develop solicitation structure that incorporates Imagine 2050 & 2050 TPP goals and objectives
- Listening sessions
- Active Transportation working group meetings

**Deliverable: Identify preferred solicitation structure**

## Decision Point 2: Application Categories and Criteria Fall 2024 – Spring 2025

- Identify application categories
- Develop prioritizing criteria
- Identify best way to incorporate new federal funding sources
- Special issue working group meetings

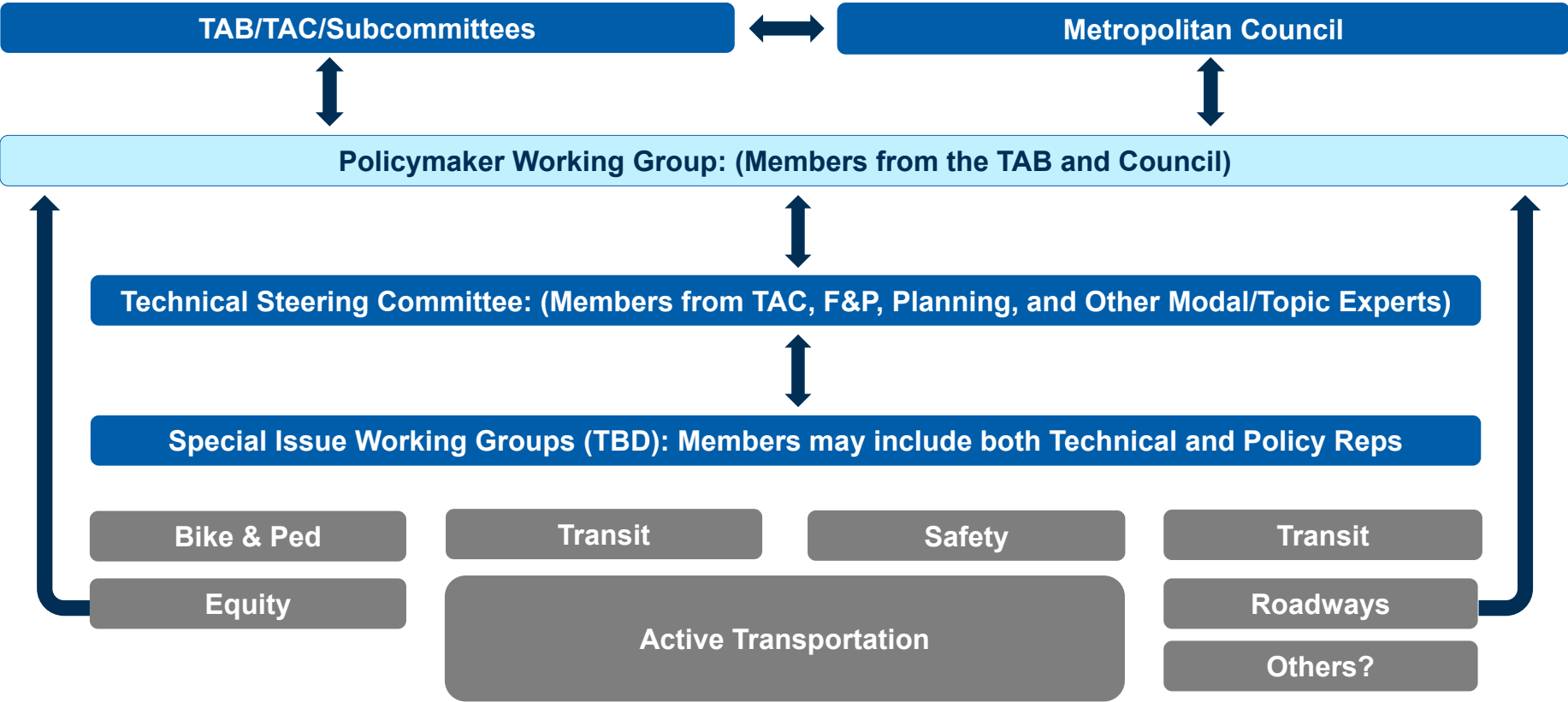
## Decision Point 3: Simplified Application Spring 2025 – Fall 2025

- Simplify application process
- Incorporate TPP performance measures
- Implement changes to application process
- Special issue working group meetings

## Decision Point 4: Final Application Materials Fall 2025 – Winter 2026

- Final application package
- Final report
- Online testing of application
- Recommend any changes to the 2050 TPP

# Decision-making Process



# Committee Structure

## Committees and roles:

**TAB/TAC/Subcommittees**—TAB is the decision-maker of the Regional Solicitation process with input from TAC and subcommittees.

**Metropolitan Council**—concur or sends back TAB decisions.

**Policymaker Working Group**—provide policy direction to the project team; recommend decisions to TAB.

**Technical Steering Committee**—provide technical direction to the project team; recommend technical decisions to the Policy Working Group.

**Special issue working groups**—dive deep into specific areas of discussion (e.g., modes, topics, funding sources); recommend direction to the Technical Steering Committee and Policy Working Group.



# Evaluation Goals

## Group discussion over the next several months:

- What goals do you want to achieve from the next Regional Solicitation process?
- What do outcomes look like as a result of those goals?



# Decision Point #1



# Decision Point #1

## Goal: Select Preferred Structure for Regional Solicitation

May	July	September
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current structure</li> <li>• Role of working group</li> <li>• Introduce structure elements</li> <li>• Peer review desktop findings</li> <li>• Peer review interview findings</li> <li>• Initial listening session feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final listening session feedback</li> <li>• Peer review interview findings</li> <li>• Discuss structure elements and respond to any directive from Policymaker Working Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review feedback from Policymaker Working Group</li> <li>• Discuss structure elements and respond to any directive from Policymaker Working Group</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide feedback on interview questions for Peer Review interviews.</b></p>	<p><b>Provide technical feedback to Policymaker Working Group.</b></p>	<p><b>Provide technical feedback to Policymaker Working Group.</b></p>

# July Meeting Prep

## Today's focus

- Introduce and describe the structure elements.
- Frame the current solicitation within the elements.
- Highlight initial themes from the listening sessions related to the elements.
- Highlight initial takeaways from peer review related to the elements and discuss interview questions.
- Answer questions and seek input on what more you want to know.

## July meeting focus

- Highlight full listening session themes related to the elements.
- Highlight peer review interview themes related to these elements.
- Discuss the pros/cons and funding implications of each element.
- **Seeking Steering Committee direction:** identify what to carry forward from each dimension into structure options.



# Solicitation Structure Elements



# Solicitation Elements


## Questions for discussion:

Over the next few meetings, we'll need to answer:

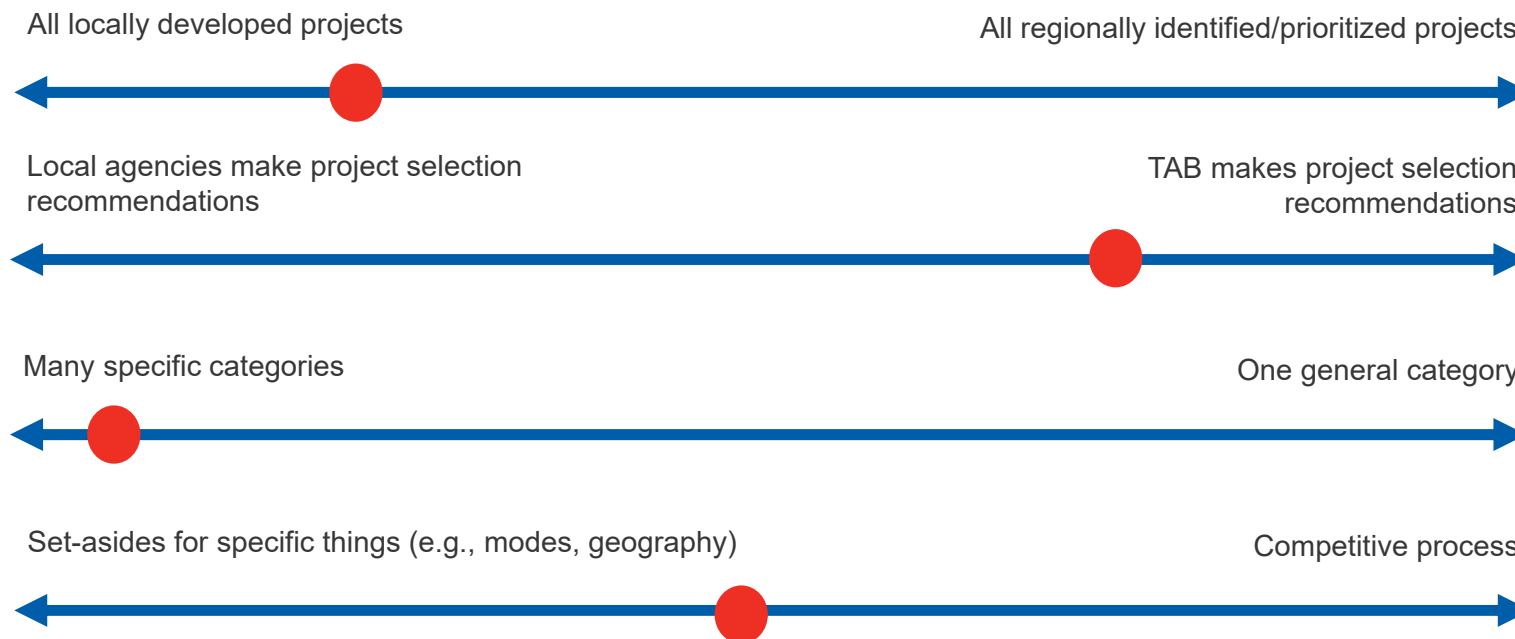
- **Project identification/prioritization:** To what extent should the Regional Solicitation fund regionally identified and prioritized projects or projects that are locally developed?
- **Project selection recommendations:** To what extent should the Regional Solicitation project selection recommendations be led by local agencies or the TAB?
- **Solicitation categories:** To what extent should the Regional Solicitation distribute funding categorically? If included, what type of categories (e.g., funding sources, modes, goals, topics, community types, project types)?
- **Set-asides:** To what extent should the Regional Solicitation include set-asides? If included, set-asides for what (e.g., modes, goals, topics, geography, project types)?

These elements can be pieced together in different ways to create an application structure.

# Current Solicitation Example

 Current solicitation

## Where do we want our structure to be?





# Listening Session Themes Summary





# Engagement plan

## Audiences

- Decision-makers
- Collaborators
- Tribal nations
- Other involved stakeholders
- Community groups

## Tactics

- Policymaker presentations
- Technical steering committee
- Stakeholder groups
- Listening sessions
- Surveys
- Workshops
- Virtual communications
- Communications campaign
- Pop-up events
- Equity focused stakeholder groups

# Listen session overview

## Goals for the listening sessions

- Introduce stakeholders to the evaluation process and ways to get involved.
- Hear from stakeholders about:
  - What's working with the current solicitation.
  - What are challenges with the current solicitation.
  - What they'd like to see moving forward related to solicitation structure and outcomes.
- Inform decision point 1—application structure.
- Provide insights to inform future decision points.

# Listening session audiences

## Stakeholders

- County staff and policymakers
- City staff and policymakers
- TAB citizen and modal representatives
- MnDOT CO, Metro, and State Aid
- U of M
- Metropolitan Airports Commission
- Suburban transit providers
- Metro Transit
- Non-profits and advocacy groups
- Park boards
- Department of Natural Resources
- Travel demand management organizations
- Consultants

# Discussion themes

## Initial themes from listening sessions...

### Project identification/prioritization

- Generally, people like more locally driven projects, especially for TDM and bike/ped.
- Some openness for more regionally driven project identification for transit, complex roadway corridors/projects.
- Some sense that modal balance of selected projects should be more reflective of regional policy priorities.

### Project selection recommendations

- People note that the current process is open and transparent.
- General sense that the region has a good process and funds quality projects in the end.
- People appreciate there being a space for deliberation in the decision-making process.

# Discussion themes

## Initial themes from listening sessions...

### Solicitation categories

- TDM doesn't fit well within the current structure—the projects and players are too different from other categories.
- Some sense that certain types of projects should only compete with each other (e.g., truck highway mobility).
- General support for modal categories, with some interest in exploring project type categories or topic categories.
- Much dissatisfaction with bike/ped geographic balance—support for scoring applicants against similar geographies in this category.

### Set-asides

- General support for some level of geographic balance, but limited support for a full set-aside.
- General support for some level of modal balance—people like making sure all modes get something.
- Split views related to current ABRT set-aside.

# Discussion themes

## Initial themes from listening sessions...

### Other topics

- Some sense that modal balance should be more reflective of policy priorities.
- General support for a maximum award, but variation on what it should be.
- Some interest in a minimum award amount because of administrative load of federal funding—desire to have the region swap funds to limit federalize projects.
- Sense that the application and selection process is too complicated, but people also appreciate that it is data-driven and transparent.
- Feedback that the cost/level of effort to complete an application is limiting—desire to streamline structure but not lose data-driven and transparent process.
- A lot of feedback on specific metrics/scoring within each category, especially for bike/ped and transit.

# Discussion themes

## Notable differences among stakeholders

### Regional perspective most reflected by state and regional agencies

- MnDOT noted that highest freight needs are not being met.
- MAC focus on critical infrastructure.
- TMO focus on regional TDM/VMT reduction.
- Suggest federalizing fewer with increased maximum award.
- Recognize need for corridor visions and support for local agencies.

### Non-profit focus on critical environmental policy concerns

- Support for travel demand management / greenhouse gas reduction
- Greenhouse gas reduction metric methodology needs improvement.
- Suggest capital versus non-capital categories.
- Recognition of land use policy connection.

# Discussion themes

## Notable differences among stakeholders

### Small city agency challenges with application cost and complexity

- Too complicated with too many rules.
- Hard to compete with larger cities/counties.
- Have not understood that info needs to be repeated for each section/scorer.
- Hard to justify level of project development without funding guarantee.
- Suggestions:
  - Planning grants.
  - Consultant support for applications.
  - Two-step screening process.
  - Programmatic or scoring differentiation by Community Designation or Transit Market Area.



# Discussion themes

## Notable differences among stakeholders

### Suburban context and policy differences

- Have transit needs but service is less productive and doesn't score well—metrics skew for urban transit routes/service.
- Hard to compete for non-motorized projects with population density of urban core.
- May not agree with regional goals or may have different local priorities.
  - Encourage a blend of local versus regional policy priorities.
- Suburban highways have regional freight role.
- GHG/TDM focus diverts funds away from highway needs.

# TSC Discussion

## Feedback on listening sessions

- What stood out to you from the initial takeaways?
- What questions do you have related to listening session themes?



# Closing Thoughts?



# Next Steps



## Next Steps:

1. Finish listening sessions
2. Complete peer review interviews
3. Policymaker Working Group meeting – June 20 and August 15
  - Technical Steering Committee meeting
    - Thursday July 25, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.?
    - Thursday September 12, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.?

## Things to think about for July Meeting:

- What technical feedback can be provided to Policymaker Working Group on the structure elements of the Regional Solicitation?



Thank You

**Steve Peterson**

Senior Manager of Highway Planning and TAB/TAC Process  
Steven.Peterson@metc.state.mn.us

**Molly Stewart, PE, PTOE**

Project Manager, SRF Consulting Group  
MStewart@srfconsulting.com

**Katie Caskey, AICP**

Stakeholder & Community Engagement Lead, HDR  
Katie.Caskey@hdrinc.com

