

# Transportation Advisory Board FAQ (October 21, 2015)

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### 1. What is the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)?

The TAB is a 33-member body, composed of 17 elected city and county officials, 4 representatives of government agencies involved in transportation issues, including the Council, 8 citizen members, and 4 members who represent transportation modes, such as transit, freight and non-motorized modes.

The TAB helps shape regional and state transportation plans. The board also solicits, reviews, and selects local transportation projects for federal funding.

The state legislature created TAB to ensure compliance with federal rules and regulations on urban transportation planning and programming.

### 2. Why was the TAB established?

In 1974, federal law changed to require that governing bodies of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) include local elected officials in the transportation decision-making process. Since the Council, as the regional transportation planning agency, was and is composed of members appointed by the Governor, TAB was created to comply with federal law. The Council, in conjunction with TAB, serves as the designated MPO and receives federal transportation funds.

### 3. Who serves on the TAB?

TAB's membership is spelled out in state law.

Minnesota Statute 473.146 Subd. 4 establishes the composition of the TAB. The TAB is intended to elicit public participation and designed to be broad in its participation and perspective.

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=473.146>

The statute states that: The Council shall establish an advisory body consisting of citizens and representatives of municipalities, counties, and state agencies in fulfillment of the planning responsibilities of the Council. The membership...must consist of:

- (1) the commissioner of transportation or the commissioner's designee;
- (2) the commissioner of the Pollution Control Agency or the commissioner's designee;
- (3) one member of the Metropolitan Airports Commission appointed by the commission;
- (4) one person appointed by the council to represent nonmotorized transportation;
- (5) one person appointed by the commissioner of transportation to represent the freight transportation industry;
- (6) two persons appointed by the council to represent public transit;
- (7) ten elected officials of cities within the metropolitan area, including one representative from each first-class city, appointed by the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities;
- (8) one member of the county board of each county in the seven-county metropolitan area, appointed by the respective county boards;
- (9) eight citizens appointed by the council, one from each council precinct; and
- (10) one elected official from a city participating in the replacement service program under section 473.388, appointed by the Suburban Transit Association; and
- (11) one member of the council, appointed by the council.

The council shall appoint a chair from among the members of the advisory body.

#### **4. Can the TAB influence the decision about who serves as TAB chair?**

Yes. TAB can nominate at least one member of the board to serve as chair and forward the nomination to the Council as an advisory comment. The TAB bylaws state the board chair “shall be recognized as a leader in the community and shall have demonstrated a sensitive insight and an aggressive concern toward the larger issues in the metropolitan area.” The bylaws require the Board Chair to act as a liaison between the Board and Council and convey to the Council the collective views of the Board unless qualifying the remarks as his or her own.

#### **5. What is TAB's role?**

TAB advises the Council and Minnesota Department of Transportation on transportation issues involving the regional highway, public transit and airport systems, as well as bike and pedestrian facilities.

A key responsibility of the Council's TAB is to solicit, review, and evaluate local project applications for federal funding. The TAB selects projects for funding and the Council must concur with the project selections to include them in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is a federally required short-range investment plan for the region. The Council cannot pick and choose among TAB's selected projects, but must concur with, or reject the entire TAB selection.

The TAB also reviews and comments on the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). The TPP is the region's long-range transportation investment plan. The plan is federally required and must be updated every four years. The TPP can be amended as needed and must be “fiscally constrained,” which means it must be based on available funding.

#### **6. What is the Regional Solicitation?**

In the Regional Solicitation process, eligible applicants are urged to apply for federal transportation funds. Eligible applicants are metro area cities, counties, and townships, state agencies, colleges and universities, school districts, American Indian tribal governments, transit providers, private nonprofit organizations, and park districts.

About \$150 million was available in the past solicitation for projects in 2018-19. The solicitation typically occurs every two years. In this case, however, the solicitation was delayed while the Council, TAB, and other transportation officials and stakeholders conducted a comprehensive review of the solicitation process and the criteria by which the TAB evaluates applications for funding.

Applicants apply for local roadway, transit, and bike and pedestrian projects. The process builds in increased flexibility so the TAB can award:

- 48%-68% of the available funds to road projects.
- 22%-33% to transit projects.
- 10%-20% to bike and pedestrian projects.

Greater flexibility gives TAB the ability to award funds to the strongest, most viable projects that offer the most benefit to the region.

#### **7. What is TAB's structure?**

The TAB has a standing Executive Committee, which primarily sets the agenda for upcoming meetings. The TAB receives technical input and expertise from its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). TAC is composed of 29 professional staff from city and county governments and the agencies involved in transportation in the seven-county region. The TAC has two standing committees, the Funding and Programming Committee and the Planning Committee, as well as ad hoc multi-modal task forces.

## **8. Is county representation on the TAB in proportion to the region's population?**

No. The makeup of the TAB is described in statute and reflects a wide range of participation and perspectives. Each county has one representative on the board. TAB also includes 10 elected city officials, so the majority of TAB members are elected officials.

## **9. What portion of the region's transportation budget does the TAB allocate through the Regional Solicitation?**

\$150 million in the current solicitation is a lot of money. But to lend greater context, federal dollars that TAB will allocate to 2040 accounts for about 3 percent of all the transportation funding that will be available to the region.

Due to constitutional dedications and specific federal and state allocation formulas, the vast majority of the revenues expected to be available to the region are dedicated funds that cannot be moved from one spending category to another. State highway revenues cannot be spent on transit, and transit revenues are not available to the state highway system. The one source of "flexible" funding available to the region is through the allocation of federal funds by TAB through the Regional Solicitation process.

In this competitive process, TAB allocates funds to local and state roadways, transit and bicycle and pedestrian projects. Over the time period of the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan, approximately \$2.2 billion of "flexible" federal funding is expected to be available through the Regional Solicitation.

## **10. Does the TAB have staff?**

There is a TAB Coordinator. Because TAB is an advisory body rather than an agency with employees, the TAB coordinator is a Council employee. However, the TAB Chair hires the coordinator, with the Board's approval. The coordinator serves at the pleasure of the board.

## **11. Is it possible to change the composition of TAB?**

Yes. However, a change in TAB would constitute a redesignation of the MPO by the Federal Highway Administration. Federal law requires that the Governor and cities that make up 75% of the metro area population, including Minneapolis, would need to approve of any change, along with the Minnesota legislature.

\*\*\* More detailed information about transportation planning is included in the Transportation Planning and Programming Guide for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, November 2013