

Minutes

TAB Technical Advisory Committee



Meeting Date: September 4, 2024

Time: 9:00 AM

Location: Virtual

Members Present:

- Jenifer Hager, Chair, Minneapolis
- Joe MacPherson, Anoka Co
- Lyndon Robjent, Carver Co
- Erin Laberee, Dakota Co
- Brian Isaacson, Ramsey Co
- Chad Ellos, Hennepin Co
- Craig Jenson, Scott Co
- Lyssa Leitner, Washington Co
- Andrew Witter, 7W

- Vacant, Metro Cities
- Charlie Howley, Chanhassen
- Robert Ellis, Eden Prairie
- Jim Kosluchar, Fridley
- Paul Oehme, Lakeville
- Dan Ruiz, Brooklyn Park
- Chris Hartzell, Woodbury
- Michael Thompson, Plymouth
- Kathleen Mayell, Minneapolis
- Nick Peterson, Saint Paul
- Bill Dermody, Saint Paul
- Molly McCartney, MnDOT

- Steve Peterson, Council MTS
- Patrick Boylan, Council CD
- Elaine Koutsoukos, TAB
- Lauren Dickerson, MPCA
- Bridget Rief, MAC
- Matt Fyten, STA
- Adam Harrington, Metro Transit
- Shelly Meyer, Freight
- Colleen Eddy, DEED
- Vacant, MN DNR
- Kyle Sobota, Bicycle
- Mackenzie Turner Bargaen, Pedestrian
- Josh Pearson, FHWA (ex-officio)
- = present

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Call to Order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Hager called the regular meeting of the TAB Technical Advisory Committee just after 9:00 a.m.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved with no changes. Therefore, no vote was needed.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Boylan and seconded by Ruiz to approve the [minutes](#) of the August 7, 2024, regular meeting of the TAB Technical Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

Public Comment on Committee Business

None.

TAB Report

Koutsoukos reported on the August 21, 2024, Transportation Advisory Board meeting.

Business – Committee Reports

Executive Committee (Jenifer Hager, Chair)

Chair Hager said that the TAC Executive Committee met prior to the meeting and discussed agenda items. She said that the January 2025 TAC meeting is currently schedule for New Year's Day and said that the meeting will be rescheduled for one week later.

Planning Committee/TPP Technical Working Group (Gina Mitteco, Chair)

Gina Mitteco said that the TAC Planning Committee had two action items in August, which will be discussed at the TAC meeting.

1. [2024-37: 2025 Unified Planning Work Program \(UPWP\)](#)

David Burns, MTS, delivered a [presentation](#).

MacPherson asked whether the Council will help with modeling following the Greenhouse Gas Vehicle Miles Traveled work. Burns replied that this is addressed briefly in the draft UPWP and that the UPWP does not always go into detail on such activities.

Motion by Isaacson and seconded by Boylan to recommend that the Metropolitan Council adopt the 2025 Unified Planning Work Program with a budget of \$8,151,320 and authorize the Regional Administrator to enter into an agreement with the State of Minnesota Department of Transportation for distribution of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) planning funds. **Motion carried.**

2. [2024-38: Functional Classification Change Request: 5th/6th Streets in Downtown Saint Paul](#)

Mitteco said that Saint Paul requests changing parts of 5th and 6th streets from major collectors to minor arterial augmenters. The TAC Planning Committee recommended the request for approval.

Burns said that given the number systemwide changes in recent years, this is the first individual change request in some time. He provided the justifications for the request and stated that augmenters supplant the principal arterial system in densely populated areas. He referenced a slight discrepancy between the map provided to the Planning Committee and MnDOT's map. The Council provided an [updated map](#) for this meeting.

Nick Peterson said that the corridors in question are the transit corridors and therefore move more people than traffic would otherwise indicate.

Jenson recalled that there had been an effort to reduce system mileage and that there was a requirement for a quarter mile of space between arterials. Burns replied that the studies leading to these conclusions were meant to bring the region in line with what is seen nationally and with FHWA guidance. In terms of spacing, he said that a quarter mile is the spacing guideline though it allows leeway in more densely developed areas. Hager added that these roadways are one-way pairs. Jenson said that the spacing is not meant to be in relation to the parallel routes and addressed that Scott County was denied a request because of spacing. Burns replied that FHWA guidelines acknowledge that this is part science and part art. Steve Peterson said that the Gold Line and B Line are going to be along these corridors. He added that another functional class study is needed. Joe Widing, MTS, said that he completed the MnDOT study four years ago and that the spacing guidelines range from one-fourth to three-fourths of a mile in dense areas to one or two miles in rural areas.

Motion by Nick Peterson and seconded by Dermody to approve the functional classification change request from major collector to minor arterial – augments for 5th Street from West 7th Street to Wall Street and 6th Street from Smith Avenue to Wall Street in downtown Saint Paul. **Motion carried.**

Steve Peterson said that the Council is trying to separate funding from functional classification, which will be a topic of discussion in 2025.

Funding and Programming (Michael Thompson, Chair)

Thompson stated that three action items were discussed at the August 15 TAC Funding and Programming Committee meeting.



1. [2024-39: Scope Change Request – SouthWest Transit Mall of America Service](#)

Thompson said in the 2016 Regional Solicitation, SouthWest Transit was awarded \$5,603,505 in the Transit Expansion category to operate a new fixed-route bus service along the I-494 corridor from Southwest Station in Eden Prairie to the Mall of America in Bloomington. This service was originally planned to operate from 5:00 am to 7:00 pm Monday to Saturday and provide service beginning at the Mall of America, intersections adjacent to I-494 & Highway 100, I-494 & France Avenue, and I-494 & Penn Avenue, and the Golden Triangle, terminating at Southwest Station. To operate this service, SouthWest Transit requested regional solicitation grant money for acquisition of eight 35-40 foot cutaway buses. Since the grant was awarded, buses have been ordered and will be delivered for service to start in early 2025.

Joe Barbeau, MTS Planning, said that the applicant is requesting ending the Golden Triangle service, extending service to the MSP airport, and extending hours of operation. Staff's scoring assessment showed minimal impact and staff, along with the Funding and Programming Committee, recommended no reduction in federal funds due to the inability for the region to retain the funds and because the Golden Triangle would be served through micro transit service.

Motion by Rief and seconded by Boylan to recommend approval of SouthWest Transit's scope change request to adjust the service area to remove the Golden Triangle, add the Airport, and increase the operating time for its Mall of America service with retention of all federal funds.

Motion carried.

2. [2024-40: Streamlined TIP Amendment: Scope Change Policy Update](#)

Joe Barbeau, MTS Planning, said that in recent years, most scope change requests have related to eliminating a part of a project that will be completed as part of a different project. This is beyond the scope of the existing policy, which assumes requests concern on-the-ground changes. In the absence of policy language written to address such changes, many TAB decisions have allowed scope changes with full retention of federal funds, provided the projects are to be completed as applied for when split among multiple contracts. Given this and the routine nature of the requests, a working group of Technical Committee representatives and contracting professionals was formed to suggest key changes to the policy. A secondary discussion occurred related to the ability to allow for otherwise informal scope changes to remain informal if a small amount of funding was involved. Staff has been hesitant to administratively allow keeping of any federal funds despite the consistent outcome of keeping smaller amounts intact. Staff further recommended additional clarification regarding changes from off-road to on-road trails that the elimination or reduction of separation or protection from roadways be added as an example of a formal scope change request.

MacPherson asked whether the cutoffs for when a project can be reviewed informally are related to funding categories and whether TAC can change the recommendation to avoid such a sharp drop off. Barbeau said that the cutoffs are not related to funding categories and that the demarcation between small and large projects could be changed. MacPherson suggested a removal threshold of \$200,000 for smaller projects. Thompson suggested that the working group and Funding and Programming Committee vetted the cutoffs and suggested not changing. Hager asked whether the working group ran through any examples. Thompson replied that this did not happen. Thompson and Barbeau agreed that the numbers shown here are not based on any precise rationale. Koutsoukos said that the table showing the cutoffs had originally been shown in a more complicated table. McCartney said that the proposed policy is compliant with federal thresholds.

Motion by Oehme and seconded by Ruiz to recommend approval of the updated Scope Change Policy including additional clarification regarding changes of bike and pedestrian projects from off-road to on-road trails that the elimination or reduction of separation or protection from roadways be added as an example of a formal scope change request. **Motion carried.**



3. [2024-41: Program Year Policy Update](#)

Thompson said that this item is related to exceptions to the one-time/one-year program year extension rule along with other clarifications. Barbeau said that in recent years, most program year extension requests have been made by applicants whose projects have become component to a larger project that is either programmed for a later year (i.e., more than one year out) or ends up being delayed. This often results in requested extensions of more than one year along with multiple extension requests for individual projects. These scenarios are not addressed in the existing policy. A working group of technical committee members examined the policy. Other proposed changes include changing milestone dates and removing the MnDOT scoresheet, which does not provide a good indication of whether a project will be able to be completed on time and it discourages early applications.

Regarding the statement “In each case, the applicant must show that its project would be ready to authorize in the currently programmed year,” Ellos asked whether this only applies to exceptions to the one-year/one-time standard. Barbeau said that this is specific to exceptions and that because the need extend is out of the applicant’s control, it is important to show that the applicant could complete the project on time. Hager asked whether this was done with the recent examples. Barbeau replied that the scoresheets showing they could go in the subsequent year were used. Hager suggested requiring it to be ready to go in the current program year could be overly restrictive. Barbeau said that a standard request requires showing readiness in one year so this is more restrictive. Robjent suggested that the sentence be removed because whether it can be met is dependent on when the applicant finds out about the need to extend.

Isaacson expressed concern over removing the criteria meant to show project readiness. MacPherson said that MN 252 has been programmed for a long time and asked whether continued extensions are desired.

Leitner suggested sending the item back to the work group and for staff to test previous applications against the proposed language. Koutsoukos said TAB requested a change because it was making many exceptions.

Motion by Isaacson and seconded by Robjent to refer the item back to the Funding & Programming Committee. Koutsoukos suggested providing the item for information at TAB. Thompson said TAB feedback will be valuable to the Funding & Programming Committee.

Hager said that the sentence in question is more restrictive than standard requests, there is no limitation on how many extensions could be received, and there is no standard on how a decision to award is extended.

Motion carried.

Information

None.

Other Business

None.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned.

Committee Contact:

Joe Barbeau, Planning Analyst

Joseph.Barbeau@metc.state.mn.us

651-602-1705

