

Minutes

TAC Funding and Programming Committee



Meeting date: August 15, 2024

Time: 1:00 PM

Location: Virtual

Members present:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bloomington – Karl Keel | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TAB Coordinator – Elaine Koutsoukos | <input type="checkbox"/> Anoka Co. – Jerry Auge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lakeville – Paul Oehme (Vice Chair) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MnDOT Metro District – Aaron Tag | <input type="checkbox"/> Carver Co. – Darin Mielke |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eden Prairie – Robert Ellis | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MnDOT Metro District State Aid – Colleen Brown | <input type="checkbox"/> Dakota Co. – Jacob Chapek |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fridley – Jim Kosluchar | <input type="checkbox"/> MnDOT Bike/Ped – Mackenzie Turner-Bargen | <input type="checkbox"/> Hennepin Co. – Jason Pieper |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minneapolis – Nathan Koster | <input type="checkbox"/> MPCA – Lauren Dickerson | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scott Co. – Adam Jessen |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plymouth – Michael Thompson (Chair) | <input type="checkbox"/> DNR – Nancy Spooner-Walsh | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wash Co. – Madeline Dahlheimer |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> St. Paul – Anne Weber | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suburban Transit Assoc. – Heidi Scholl | <input type="checkbox"/> = present, E = excused |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met Council – Cole Hiniker | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Metro Transit – Scott Janowiak | | |

DRAFT

Call to order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Thompson called the regular meeting of the TAC Funding and Programming Committee to order at 1:03 p.m.

Agenda approved

Chair Thompson noted that a roll call vote was not needed for approval of the agenda unless a committee member offered an amendment to the agenda. Committee members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda.

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Robert Ellis, seconded by Elaine Koutsoukos, to approve the minutes of the June 20, 2024, regular meeting of the TAC Funding and Programming Committee. **Motion carried** unanimously.

Public comment on committee business

None.

TAB report

Elaine Koutsoukos, TAB Coordinator, gave a report of the July 17 meeting of the Transportation

Advisory Board.

Business

2024-39: Southwest Transit Scope Change (Joseph Barbeau, MTS)

Joseph Barbeau, Metropolitan Transportation Services, provided an overview of business item 2024-39.

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.

A thorough analysis was performed by SouthWest Transit to analyze ridership along the I-494 corridor and customer needs have changed dramatically since 2016. This analysis has resulted in three requests as a part of this scope change.

Request 1: SouthWest Transit requests removing the Golden Triangle from the service area

In 2023, only 1,201 unlinked passenger trips were taken from Golden Triangle to other service areas. Further, existing ridership from SouthWest Transit's Prime microtransit service shows that 45.3% of rides beginning within the Golden Triangle were within Eden Prairie. Therefore, SouthWest Transit identifies the requested scope change as removing redundant service from Golden Triangle.

Request 2: SouthWest Transit requests extending service to Minneapolis/Saint Paul Airport terminals

SouthWest Transit's Prime microtransit service has operated for three years and the agency has observed a 719.5% increase in rides to the airport. Ridership to the airport is 9.8 times greater than in the Golden Triangle.

Request 3: SouthWest Transit requests increasing service days and hours

As a result of ridership trends to and from the airport, SouthWest Transit requests increasing service days and hours. Weekday service will operate from 5am to 7pm with 30-minute frequency. Weekend service will operate as an express from 5am to 11pm with 45-minute frequency.

J. Barbeau introduced two SouthWest Transit staff to add additional context to this request.

Stephanie Alexander, SouthWest Transit, noted that the regional transportation map shows that there is a significant gap in service along the corridor that the service is being adjusted to serve.

Cole Hiniker, Metropolitan Transportation Services, asked for clarification on the long-term vision for this service with particular emphasis on the Golden Triangle.

S. Alexander noted that once the Southwest Light Rail has opened there will be a reevaluation of service in the Golden Triangle. As it stands now, SouthWest Prime ridership shows that trips originating within or near the Golden Triangle do not terminate outside of that area.

C. Hiniker asked if the service change will still provide connectivity with the Green Line.



S. Alexander confirms that it does.

E. Koutsoukos noted a previous scope change for SouthWest Transit related to SouthWest Prime.

N. Koster noted that a map would be helpful with this scope change to describe the areas pertaining to the change.

It was moved by Robert Ellis, seconded by Maddie Dahlheimer, that the Funding & Programming Committee 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.

Motion carried.

2024-40: Scope Change Policy Update (Joe Barbeau, MTS)

Joseph Barbeau, Metropolitan Transportation Services, provided an overview of business item 2024-40.

J. Barbeau outlined that projects funded through the Regional Solicitation process are selected based on how well they will address safety, congestion, air quality and other criteria used in the scoring evaluation. TAB wants to ensure that the benefits from any re-scoped projects are essentially intact. Therefore, applicants that want to make changes to a project's scope are subject to the Scope Change Policy, last updated in 2019. That change defined administrative, informal, and formal scope changes.

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 related to termini, changing needs for bus types, and other changes that occur during project development. 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. The working group also addressed the Program Year Policy, which is discussed in action item 2024-41. Members agreed that the primary objective is to do what is in the public's best interest; for example, avoid creating situations in which something that was recently built needs to be torn up to accommodate the next project. Therefore, members favored codifying the ability for parts of projects to be transferred when needed. The changes proposed here are a result of work done by members and Metropolitan Council staff.

Chair Thompson clarified on the inclusion of changes to the policy regarding bikeway changes.

J. Barbeau confirmed that this is to prevent a formal amendment for smaller changes to bikeway projects.

Colleen Brown concurred with TAB on their comment regarding bikeway changes.

Nathan Koster concurred with Jason Pieper on the staff effort for this policy change. Additionally, they sought clarification on the differences between formal and informal changes regarding bikeway changes.

Chair Thompson noted that slight changes to a trail alignment would be informal. However, if a trail was moved from off-street to on-street would require a formal amendment.



It was moved by Colleen Brown, seconded by Elaine Koutsoukos, that the Funding & Programming Committee recommend approval of the updated Scope Change Policy.

Motion carried.

2024-41: Program Year Policy Update (Joe Barbeau, MTS)

Joseph Barbeau, Metropolitan Transportation Services, provided an overview of business item 2024-40.

J. Barbeau outlined that the Regional Program Year Policy was established to address projects not being let in their program years, as is required by FHWA. The policy, which was last updated in 2014, allows for a one-time, one-year program year extension and includes a scoresheet on which a minimum score is needed for a request to be granted. 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 representatives and contracting professionals was formed to suggest key changes to the policy. The working group also addressed the Scope Change Policy, which is discussed in action item 2024-40.

Elaine Koutsoukos noted that a “behind the scenes” action is now codified in this new policy. This newly codified component reads; “If a project start date will be more than one year after end of program year, project manager notifies grants manager and consults with TAB coordinator to demonstrate ability to complete project.”

Colleen Brown clarified a change that was omitted from the policy.

It was moved by Elaine Koutsoukos, seconded by Colleen Brown, that the Funding & Programming Committee recommend approval of the updated Program Year Policy.

Motion carried.

Information

None.

Reports

None.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:03 p.m.

Council contact:

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