

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAC FUNDING & PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

Thursday, April 22, 2021

Committee Members Present: Michael Thompson (Chair, Plymouth), Jerry Auge (Anoka County), Angie Stenson (Carver County), Jenna Fabish (Dakota County), Jason Pieper (Hennepin County), John Mazzitello (Ramsey County), Craig Jenson (Scott County), Joe Ayers-Johnson (Washington County), Elaine Koutsoukos (TAB), Cole Hiniker (Metropolitan Council), Anna Flintoft (Metro Transit), Molly McCartney (MnDOT Metro District), Colleen Brown (MnDOT Metro District State Aid), Mehjabeen Rahman (MPCA), Mackenzie Turner Barger (MnDOT Bike & Ped), Nancy Spooner-Mueller (DNR), Aaron Bartling (MVTA), Karl Keel (Bloomington), Jim Kosluchar (Fridley), Ken Ashfeld (Maple Grove), Paul Oehme (Lakeville), Ethan Fawley (Minneapolis), Anne Weber (St. Paul)

Committee Members Absent: Robert Ellis (Eden Prairie)

I. CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Thompson called the regular meeting of the Funding & Programming Committee to order at 1:31 p.m. on Thursday, April 22, 2022. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held via teleconference.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved without a vote. A vote is only needed if changes are made to the agenda.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: It was moved by Ashfeld and seconded by Kosluchar to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2021, regular meeting of the Funding & Programming Committee. The motion was approved unanimously via roll call.

IV. TAB REPORT

Koutsoukos reported on the April 22, 2021, TAB meeting.

V. BUSINESS

None.

VI. INFORMATION

1. Electric Vehicle Study Update

Tony Fischer from the Metropolitan Council provided an update of the Electric Vehicle Study. The study goals including identifying strategies to accelerate electric vehicle adoption in the Twin Cities as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve public health; guide future investment policies and other work to accelerate electric vehicle adoption for the Metropolitan Council and partner agencies; and inform the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan and other investment and policy proposals. The study is scheduled to be completed by December 2021.

2. Regional Solicitation Before and After Study Update

Project consultant Lance Bernard from HKGi shared an update of the Regional Solicitation Before and After Study, Phase II. Keel asked whether the idea of shifting federal funds away from some projects was explored, to which Bernard replied that some regions provide funds to

sub-geographies of the region, some use the long-range transportation plan to guide investment, and others use a call for proposals. Keel asked whether more time and money are devoted to application submissions than in other regions. Bernard said that the commitment is roughly the same and that the Council's solicitation is more qualitative than most.

Stenson asked whether the study is going to explore the impact of the Regional Solicitation on TPP goals and objectives. Bernard said that the study efforts is moving in that direction, though more built projects are needed.

3. Pedestrian Safety Study Overview

Heidi Schallberg from the Metropolitan Council provided an update on the Regional Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, the goal of which is to end pedestrian deaths and serious injuries on roads in the region. A draft report is scheduled to be provided in the winter of 2022.

4. Regional Solicitation Funding Categories and Funding Ranges

Steve Peterson from the Metropolitan Council said that there will be two more cycles before updates of Thrive MSP 2040 and the TPP likely lead to a major Regional Solicitation update. He offered the raising of minimum funding amounts as a way to reduce federal burden, though he also acknowledged smaller projects have contributed to geographic balance. He said that the \$250,000 minimum in Traffic Management Technologies is lower than applicants tend to request.

Peterson said that there has been confusion over the ability to apply for a bicycle/pedestrian bridge projects in several categories and asked whether those projects need their own category. Kosluchar asked whether scoring for projects with and without bridges provides difficulty and whether TAB suggested a need for a separate category. Koutsoukos and Barbeau said that TAB did not make any such suggestion. Barbeau also said he has not heard about any scoring difficulties. McCartney said that she chaired the Safe Routes to School (SRTS)/Pedestrian scoring committee and said there was some confusion over which category(ies) bridge projects should be submitted to. Barbeau shared that the bridge applications were very well-spread in terms of scoring.

Fawley said he did not see a need for significant changes for bicycle/pedestrian bridges. He said that the high amount of funding in 2020 for Strategic Capacity is not in line with regional goals and policy, possibly an indication that the \$10 million maximum should be reduced, the \$7 million maximum in Bridge and Reconstruction/Modernization should be increased, and/or that TAB should provide clear guidance on the balance between expansion and maintenance. Thompson suggested that raising the minimum for Reconstruction/Modernization may be more favored as there are housing demands in counties on the outskirts of the metro area and few expansion opportunities to accommodate them.

Keel suggested an increase in the \$250,000 federal minimum amounts the Pedestrian and Multiuse Trails and Bicycle categories, though perhaps not in the SRTS category. Koutsoukos said that several Pedestrian applications were below \$500,000, federal, typically to smaller communities. Barbeau shared that three of the Pedestrian applications were below \$500,000 federal in 2020. Stenson said that two cities in Carver County have received low-cost SRTS underpass projects.

Pieper suggested that recency bias could lead to hastily made changes.

Keel said that funding small projects is not an efficient approach to delivering federal money. Thompson said that other MPOs tend to have higher award amounts. He said that the \$250,000 seems like a low minimum for Transit Management Technologies and it could be increased to \$500,000 or \$1 million. Similarly, the minimums for Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian facilities could be moved to \$500,000. He added that conversation for increasing the maximum for Reconstruction/Modernization should be explored.

Kosluchar said that for small communities, the Regional Solicitation may be the only opportunity to secure six-digit funding. He added support for a methodology for consolidating federal funds into few projects, which would help the process become more efficient. Hiniker added that there are small communities that benefit from lower minimum amounts that are not represented in the committee process.

Keel said that \$800 million has been awarded over the past four Regional Solicitations and that even 5% inefficiency is \$40 million, a significant amount.

McCartney expressed disappointment in how few Spot Mobility and Safety applications were submitted and added that too many Strategic Capacity projects were funded in order to provide a project to every county. Peterson replied that he has heard that more agencies are interested in submitting to Spot Mobility and Safety.

Hinker suggested that in Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities more points could be awarded for gaps and barriers if there is interest in pushing bridges to that category.

Stenson said that the top three unfunded projects in Safety and Spot Mobility were in Carver County, Woodbury, and Rogers, which was a part of the geographic balance discussion.

5. Regional Solicitation: Policies, Qualifying Criteria, and Eligibility

Postponed.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Thompson adjourned the meeting.

Joe Barbeau
Recording Secretary