

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD  
Metropolitan Council  
390 N. Robert St., St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-1805

Minutes of a Meeting of the  
FUNDING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
October 15, 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tim Mayasich (chair), Colleen Brown, Kyle Burrows (for Mary Karlsson), Bob Byers, Innocent Eyoh, Andy Hingeveid (for Craig Jenson), Jane Kansier, Karl Keel, Andrew Korsberg, Jim Kosluchar, Elaine Koutsoukos, Bruce Loney, Eriks Ludins, Molly McCartney, Gina Mitteco, Ryan Peterson, Steve Peterson, Ann Pung-Terwedo, Lyndon Robjent, Michael Thompson, Andrew Witter and Joe Barbeau (staff)

OTHERS PRESENT: John Doan (Hennepin County) and Carl Ohrn (Metropolitan Council)

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m.

**2. Adoption of Agenda**

Motion: Kansier moved to adopt the agenda. Seconded by Koutsoukos. The motion was approved unanimously.

**3. Approval of the Minutes**

MOTION: Ludins moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by Steve Peterson. The motion was approved unanimously.

**4. Scope Change Request – Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail Crossings – Action Item**

John Doan from Hennepin County provided a summary of the scope change request. The project includes three trail grade separations near the planned Southwest Light Rail (SWLRT) extension: a bridge near the Beltline Station and tunnels near the Wooddale and Blake Stations. The updated scope would incorporate the project into the base SWLRT project, returning \$2.1 million to TAB, provided the SWLRT full-funding grant agreement (FFGA) is approved. The project sponsor would change from Hennepin County to Metro Transit and stairs would be added to each crossing. The County requests that TAB not reallocate the funds until after the FFGA is signed, which would enable the project to revert to its original scope should the agreement not be completed. The project will be completed on or before the same timeline as originally proposed.

Steve Peterson asked whether TAB's Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding is being used as the local match for the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) New Starts funding. Koutsoukos replied that it is not a match. New Starts funding and the TAB funding will cover the federal portion of the project. All match is local. Doan said that the match would be covered by the City of St. Louis Park, the City of Hopkins, Three Rivers Park District, and Hennepin County. MnDOT State Aid will still monitor the project.

Mayasich asked what happens if the FFGA does not come to fruition. Doan replied that the original proposal would be completed. Koutsoukos added that this is why TAB is asked to hold the project until the end of 2016.

Robjent asked whether there is enough New Starts funding to fund the entire project. Doan replied that New Starts only funds up to 50 percent of a project.

Robjent asked whether the request could be made after the fate of the FFGA is known. Doan replied that the budget needs to be set prior to that time.

Brown said that the trail crossings are shown in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), as required by FTA if the project is to be absorbed by SWLRT.

Mayasich asked whether Metro Transit staff would be working on project design. Doan replied that the SWLRT project office is already working on that.

MOTION: Keel moved to approve the scope change request. Seconded by Mitteco. The motion was approved unanimously.

**5. TIP Amendment – Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail Crossings – Action Item**

Barbeau said that the TIP amendment goes along with the scope change request.

Keel moved to recommend approval of the TIP amendment with the condition that \$2,119,000 be held by TAB until and unless the FFGA is declined. Seconded by Thompson. The motion was approved unanimously.

**6. Regional Solicitation Update: Roadways – Information Item**

Steve Peterson discussed potential changes to the application forms, qualifying requirements, and Roadways applications in the Regional Solicitation.

Application Forms

The title of the “Bridges” application is proposed to change to “Bridge Rehabilitation/Reconstruction,” which clarifies that the application is not directed to new bridges.

After discussing the application and procurement processes with transit providers, staff proposes inflating transit vehicle and operating costs as it does other costs.

Brown suggested clarifying that “estimate of eligible project costs really means “estimate of federally eligible project costs.”

The budget has been adjusted to be able to better-track multimodal elements.

Staff recommends that noise walls not be included for the purpose of calculating cost/benefit measures. The reason for this is that there tends to be a great deal of uncertainty around whether noise walls will be included, rendering the potential for an unfair disadvantage in cost/benefit scoring for those who incorrectly program a noise wall.

Staff recommends that completion of the MnDOT interchange approval process be included in the risk assessment measure. The handout provided suggests 25 percent of the risk assessment be devoted to this. Keel suggested that 25 percent is high, given that right-of-way and railroad involvement show lower percentages. Robjent expressed agreement and suggested that completion of the interchange approval process should be worth less than right-of-way and railroad involvement.

Robjent said that Risk Assessment had minimal impact on the rankings in the previous Solicitation and suggested that it should be worth more points. Koutsoukos replied that point allocations will be discussed after the measures are complete.

Qualifying Requirements

Staff recommended increases in the award minimums for the Bicycle and Pedestrian facilities categories. Staff suggested an increase to \$250,000 for Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Facilities and to \$150,000 for Safe Routes to School. No application to the 2014 Regional Solicitation was lower than these amounts. This would help assure that applicants do not have cost-prohibitive federal requirements.

Robjent suggested that the maximum of \$5.5 million for Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities should be changed. Previous Regional Solicitations had a \$1 million maximum for Transportation Enhancements, though STP funds could be used in larger amounts. He suggested a maximum of \$3.5 million. Burrows asked what the rationale was for the \$5.5 million maximum, to which Robjent replied that this was the STP maximum in the old Solicitations. Korsberg said that some DNR solicitations sort projects into scoring groups by funding range. Keel expressed

doubt that TAB would want to go down that path. Byers said that expensive projects tend to be more regional, to which Mayasich replied that this needs to be balanced with geographic equity. Mitteco said that pedestrian bridges often cost as much as \$3 million. Staff will provide the \$3.5 million maximum for Multiuse Trails and Bicycle Facilities as an option to TAC.

Staff suggested quantifying expected useful life for various project types. Members did not feel that this is necessary and the qualification to operate and maintain projects for their useful life should remain as is.

#### Roadway Applications

Staff recommended that the Daily Heavy Commercial Traffic measure ask applicants to identify, for new roadways, the current daily heavy traffic volume that will be relocated from any parallel roadway(s) to the new roadway.

As a way to address the difficulty that less-traveled A-minor sub-classifications have competing, staff suggested separating the scoring by sub-classifications for several measures. Had this been done in the 2014 Regional Solicitation, some projects would have flipped and one connector may have been funded. Keel suggested that a risk could be that a project from a sub-class with few applications could be awarded funding despite not being a good project. He asked whether there could be a policy to fund at least one roadway in each sub-classification. Ohrn replied that this has been discussed but skipping projects on the ranked list has not been a popular idea. Staff will provide options to TAC.

Staff recommended removal of the existing local activity center points for the Regional Economy measure. This provided difficulty and confusion to applicants. Koutsoukos added that staff is considering the possibility of using a range rather than a “yes/no” score, which can make up for eliminating the local activity center score. Robjert expressed preference for that option, as it would create more spread in the scores. He suggested using traffic analysis zones (TAZs). Staff will explore the possibility of doing this.

Staff suggested eliminating the 50-year old cap from Infrastructure Age and simply providing the most points to the oldest roadway. Ryan Peterson suggested that age is not a great indicator of condition. Keel replied that there is no consistent pavement rating so age may be the best option.

Staff recommended that the Congestion Reduction measure allow for analysis at multiple intersections, which would provide a better indication of project benefits. Eyoh said that for new roadways, the Synchro program sometimes shows negative emissions.

TAC asked for options to include railroad crossing statistics as an allowable substitute for intersection crashes in safety scoring. Staff has created a railroad crossing scoring mechanism that could be used. Only two railroad crossing projects were submitted in response to the 2014 Regional Solicitation, with neither funded. Had the scoring mechanism been used, one of them would have been funded. General consensus among committee members was to leave this scoring mechanism out of the measure.

Staff suggested eliminating the Multimodal Connections measures and focusing on the Multimodal Facilities measure. It has been suggested to include freight as a multimodal element. This could include, for example, widening shoulders. This idea will be shared with TAC.

Because cost effectiveness of emissions reduction did not provide meaningful results, staff suggested removing cost effectiveness and replacing it with an additional “cost/benefit” measure.

The Infrastructure Deficiencies measure within the Roadway Reconstruction/Modernization application proved difficult to score. Staff suggested adding criteria to make this less arbitrary. The Committee agreed to eliminate the “full-depth reclamation” criterion. Mitteco suggested including a criterion for streetscape elements.

#### **7. Quarterly Report on Streamlined TIP Amendments – Information Item**

Barbeau said that two TIP amendments started in Quarter 3, one streamlined and one standard.

**8. Scope Change Review Process – Information Item**

Mayasich requested that members read the material provided as this issue will be addressed at a future meeting.

**9. Other Business**

No other business.

**10. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned.