
*Transportation Advisory Board
of the Metropolitan Council*

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, July 7, 2021
9:00 A.M.**

Members Present: Jon Solberg, Scott Mareck, Joe MacPherson, Lyndon Robjent, Gina Mitteco, Chad Ellos, Lisa Freese, Emily Jorgensen, Elaine Koutsoukos, Steve Peterson, Michael Larson, Erin Mitchell, Andrew Emanuele, Mehjabeen Rahman, Bridget Rief, Matt Fyten, Danny McCullough, Karl Keel, Ken Ashfeld, Charlie Howley, Paul Oehme, Marc Culver, Robert Ellis, Jim Kosluchar, Ethan Fawley, Jenifer Hager, Jim Voll

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Solberg at 9:00 a.m. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held via video conference.

2. Approval of Agenda

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

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the June 2, 2021 meeting were presented to the Committee for consideration. A motion to approve the June minutes was made by Mr. Ashfeld and seconded by Mr. Oehme. Motion carried.

(Meeting minutes for the March 4, 2020, minutes will be presented for approval at a future committee meeting.)

4. TAB Report

TAB Coordinator Ms. Koutsoukos provided a summary of the June 16, 2021 meeting.

5. Committee Reports

1. Executive Committee (Jon Solberg, Chair)

Chair Solberg reported that the Executive Committee met to review the agenda items and did not discuss the bylaws as planned.

2. TAC Action Items

a. 2021-21: Streamlined 2021-2024 TIP Amendment for MnDOT: I-35W Frontage Road Turnback

Joe Barbeau from MTS stated that this streamlined TIP amendment would increase the cost and scope of a turnback project in Bloomington. The cost and change in length require that this item be a scope change request. A motion recommending adoption of the TIP amendment request was made by Mr. MacPherson and seconded by Mr. Keel. Motion carried.

3. Planning Committee (Emily Jorgensen, Chair)

No items.

4. Funding and Programming Committee (Michael Thompson, Chair)

No items.

6. Information Items

1. Twin Cities Highway Mobility Needs Study

Mr. Peterson presented this item along with Paul Czech from MnDOT. On this study, MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council set a highway mobility target for the Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP). This effort will inform several other efforts including an equity study, regional transportation and climate change study, electric vehicle planning study, Principal Arterial Intersection Conversion Study, and TPP goals.

Mr. Keel asked how the goal of 40 annual hours of delay per person compares to other regions. Paul Morris from SRF said that the Twin Cities rates roughly in the middle among peer regions Denver, Seattle, San Diego, and Tampa. Mr. Keel asked whether transit and transit advantages were considered, to which Mr. Morris said that the delay only considers the highway mode, though those on other modes could experience the same change. He added that transit experiences similar benefits to highways and that mode-shift is a contributor.

Mr. Robjent asked why the total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) flattened, to which Mr. Morris said that a fixed land use distribution was assumed so elasticity was not considered. Ms. Hager asked how the target aligns with the VMT reduction target and greenhouse gas emission reduction target. Mr. Czech said that the studies occurred simultaneously, which limited the opportunity to assess how much those targets will be addressed. Cole Hinker, from the MTS asked whether any city has reduced its delay per capita, to which Mr. Czech said that a researcher told him that this happened in Houston in the early 1970s. Mr. Peterson added that per capita delay is used because regions are growing.

2. Transit Background from the 2020 Regional Solicitation

Mr. Peterson summarized the process that led to the establishment of a dedicated bus rapid transit project, along with which came a limitation to total bus rapid transit funding a guarantee of funding in a suburban transit market. The limitation led to skipping of some higher-scoring projects.

Mr. Hiniker said that the pros and cons table is staff's qualitative assessment and members should provide feedback prior to the upcoming TAB meeting.

3. Regional Solicitation: Application Category Purpose Statement

Mr. Peterson shared updated purpose statements to the funding categories, which come from a recommendation in the Before and After Study. This could serve as a starting point to the next Regional Solicitation overhaul in two cycles.

4. Regional Solicitation: Application Category Criteria and Weighting

Mr. Barbeau said that the TIP public comment resulted in 146 comments. He shared the draft criteria weighting, which showed no changes since 2020. He said that the Funding & Programming Committee had concerns that projects performing well in Safety and Congestion/Air Quality were not scoring well overall and could be worth more points overall and that safety could also be weighed more heavily than Congestion/Air Quality.

Mr. Mareck said that he would need more information on how they related to the regional outcomes at the system level before he could provide feedback on weighting.

Ms. Hager said that the suggestion to increase safety weight is related to conversations about Toward Zero Deaths.

Ms. Mitteco said that the weight given to multimodal facilities seems high in the Pedestrian Facilities Category, given that the measure was designed to assure that roadways address other modes. She added that Pedestrian Facilities projects are small, so 14% is a high weight to provide that criterion in that category. Mr. Barbeau said that this measure can incorporate bikes. He added that the higher percentage could be related to a smaller number of measures in the category. Ms. Koutsoukos said that TAB weighted each measure within each category based on priorities.

Mr. Mareck said that there should be a broader discussion about these investments in relation to the over-investment strategy for the region, which should occur in development of the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP).

Ms. Hager commented on the Spot Mobility and Safety category, recommending that safety and congestion points, which are evenly split, should be two-thirds to safety and one-third to congestion because pedestrian fatality trends are worsening. Mr. Ellos echoed Ms. Hager's comment and said Hennepin County is supportive of that approach. Ms. Mitteco and Chair Solberg expressed support. Mr. Culver expressed concern with recommending specific targets to TAB. Chair Solberg asked whether the recommendation to shift points towards safety without a specific proportion being named, with which Ms. Hager was agreeable.

5. Regional Solicitation: Funding Guarantees and Limitations

Mr. Barbeau reminded members of the guaranteed funding for each roadway functional classification, the arterial bus rapid transit project, the \$32M ABRT/BRT maximum total award, the transit new market guarantee, and the \$10 M bridge target. Mr. Barbeau said that in 2014 only one bridge project was funded, which made some TAB members unhappy. The target allows for two projects to likely be funded, while maintaining flexibility.

6. Regional Solicitation: Scoring Measure Changes

Mr. Barbeau said that staff is targeting scoring measures that presented problems for applicants or scorers. The risk assessment measure confused some with its definition of layouts and rights-of-way, as well as scoring public involvement. Proposed changes showed a clearer definition of a layout and broadened the scoring range. For right-of-way, staff suggested adding language involving MnDOT agreements and limited use agreements. A simplification and clarification of the public involvement measure is also needed. Staff clarified that this sub-measure is about opportunity for involvement as opposed to quality of feedback. Staff also drafted language focusing less on meetings to better acknowledge other outreach methods.

Mr. Kosluchar asked about the use of the phrase "project need" as opposed to "project outcomes" or "performance," to which Mr. Barbeau replied that it is meant to applicants determine project need. Ms. Koutsoukos said that projects have been withdrawn in the past because of public backlash. Mr. Kosluchar said that many needs are identified in planning documents that the public may not understand in short notice and expressed uncertainty about the appropriateness of the word "need."

Ms. Hager asked whether connecting with key partner agencies is captured elsewhere in the Regional Solicitation. Mr. Barbeau replied that this phrase is not included elsewhere. Ms. Koutsoukos said that points from the partner agencies are awarded via the layout. Ms. Hager said that this is a larger issue than layouts and that it is important to have early coordination. Mr. Barbeau said that letters of support

could cover this and that the removal of the phrase was related to simplifying the measure. Ms. Koutsoukos said that in the previous cycle a county project resulted in a letter opposing the project from a city and suggested that partners be listed. Chair Solberg said that it is not only adjacent agencies but any potentially impacted agency that should be consulted. Ms. Jorgensen said that transit operations-only applicants do not fill out the risk assessment, and that this should be re-considered to include engagement in the risk assessment. Mr. Barbeau replied that this was overlooked in the last cycle and every applicant could be required to fill out the public involvement piece.

Mr. Barbeau said that staff is working with Community Development on making the affordable housing measure easier. If it cannot be done, the Housing Performance Score is likely to be maintained.

7. Regional Solicitation: Scoring Measure Outlier Adjustments

Mr. Barbeau shared the history of adjusting for outliers in proportionate scoring measures. The question now is how to define and adjust for outliers. He said that the Funding & Programming Committee settled on adjusting a second-ranked project to a proportion of the top-ranked project. Mr. Barbeau pointed to an example of an adjustment that would meet a) the general impression of an outlier and b) a standard adjustment that did not effectively impact overall spread but was particularly impactful in diminishing the advantage of the top-rated project.

Mr. Kosluchar said that the complexity shows the potential for unwanted outcomes through application of a structured rule, which shows that experienced professionals should review projects on a case-by-case basis.

8. Regional Solicitation: Potential Options for Geographic Balance

Mr. Peterson and Jed Hanson from MTS presented this information item. Mr. Peterson said that a key question is whether anything in the Regional Solicitation should be included in the application language to address geographic balance. Mr. Hanson shared graphics that showed an even distribution, by county, over the past four cycles. He also showed the location of several projects that indicated a large spread of users. Mr. Peterson said that feedback from the Funding & Programming Committee was to look at geographic balance over time and not to codify language. Chair Solberg added that historically, there has been direction not to skip higher-scoring projects. Ms. Hager expressed agreement with the Funding & Programming Committee. Ms. Mitteco said the discussion should be broader than “every county gets a project.”

7. Agency Updates

Chair Solberg announced that INFRA grant applications are due on July 12 and that MnDOT Metro District received a \$60M award for I-494.

Ms. Rief said that MAC Committee and Commission meetings are going to be in-person starting with the commission meeting on July 21.

8. Other Business and Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:04 a.m.

Prepared by:

Joe Barbeau