

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

Minutes of a Meeting of the
FUNDING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
August 21, 2014

MEMBERS PRESENT: Karl Keel (chair), Steve Albrecht, Colleen Brown, Innocent Eyoh, Jenifer Hager, Craig Jenson, Brian Isaacson, Mark Filipi, Tom Johnson, Jane Kansier, Mary Karlsson, Elaine Koutsoukos, Joe Lux, Bruce Loney, Eriks Ludins, Joe Lux, Ann Pung-Terwedo, Lyndon Robjent, John Sass, Michael Thompson, Cynthia Wheeler, Andrew Witter, Joe Barbeau (staff), and Heidi Schallberg (staff)

1. Call to Order

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

2. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

3. Approval of the Minutes

Minutes from the July meeting was approved unanimously.

4. TAB Report

Elaine Koutsoukos reported on the August 20 TAB meeting. William Goins, FedEx, is the new TAB freight representative. TAC has three new members: Michael Larson, Metropolitan Council Community Development; Dave Christianson, Freight Representative, MnDOT Freight Office; and Danny McCullough, Non-Motorized Representative, Statewide Non-Motorized Transportation Committee. Steve Peterson, SRF, presented an update of the Regional Solicitation packet. On consent, TAB approved the Ramsey County scope change removing the Dale Street portion from its HSIP project; recommended the functional classification system map for approval; approved the 2017-2019 HSIP solicitation; and accepted the public comments for, and approved, the I-494 Plymouth TIP amendment. As action items, TAB approved the modal funding ranges for the 2014 regional solicitation; approved the 2015 Unified Planning Work Program; and adopted the public comment report for, and approved, the 2015-2018 TIP.

Karl Keel introduced Mark Filipi and Mary Karlsson as new members representing Metropolitan Transportation Services and Metro Transit, respectively.

5. Regional Solicitation Design – Action Item

Heidi Schallberg thanked members for their hard work on the regional solicitation design process.

Steve Peterson of SRF provided a review of the solicitation design.

Schallberg shared the Steering Committee recommendations for the Equity criterion, which has been renamed “Equity and Housing Performance.” The Steering Committee recommended that Equity and Housing Performance be weighted at 10 percent for roadway projects, 12 percent for non-motorized projects, 20 percent for transit expansion, and 15 percent for transit modifications and travel demand management. In each case, the Steering Committee recommended that housing account for seven percent of the total project score, with equity making up the remainder of the measure. For those communities without housing scores, total project scores would be normalized.

Peterson asked for comments on all sections of the proposed solicitation. The below sections generated discussion.

Requirements and Forms

Additions agreed upon by the group:

- Adding to the beginning of item number 2 of the “Roadways Including Multimodal Elements” requirements: “Federal funds are available for roadway construction and reconstruction on new alignments or within existing right-of-way, including associated construction and excavation, bridges, or installation of traffic signals, signs, utilities, bikeway or walkway components and transit components.” Within that same item, “Noise barriers, drainage projects, fences, landscaping, etc., are not eligible for funding unless included as part of a larger project, which is otherwise eligible” should be changed to “Noise barriers, drainage projects, fences, landscaping, etc., are not eligible for funding as a standalone project, but can be included as part of the larger submitted project, which is otherwise eligible.”
- Changing “the bridge must carry highway traffic” to “the bridge must carry vehicular traffic” for item number 6 of the “Roadways Including Multimodal Elements” requirements.
- Superstructure and substructure should not be included as excluded costs under item number 9 of the bridge requirements. The draft solicitation had references to not allowing superstructure and substructure for bridges on other roadway projects. Colleen Brown said that these elements should be allowed and that the references should be removed throughout.

Tom Johnson asked whether the restriction against applying for two projects within 3.5 miles of each other would apply to an agency wishing to apply for a bridge project and a roadway project. Cote replied that it would.

Jenifer Hager asked why bridges are only eligible for “A” minor arterials and above, whereas past solicitations allowed for collectors and above. Karl Keel said that the change was made because funds are limited. Cote added that the rationale was to focus on regionally significant roadways.

Roadway Expansion Application

Innocent Eyoh asked whether PM 2.5 and carbon dioxide can be added to air quality measures. Peterson replied that the model cannot produce output on five pollutants.

Elaine Koutsoukos suggested adding a bullet for “existing routes on the project” under the response section for the first measure under usage. This would also apply to the same measure for the following applications: Roadway Reconstruction/Modernization, Roadway System Management, and Bridges.

Transit Expansion and Transit Modernization

Jane Kansier asked whether data can be available in advance for information filled in by Metropolitan Council staff. Koutsoukos replied that much of that data will be available to the applicant during the application period, though some will not be able to be made available. Keel suggested that these scores could be sent to the applicants.

Regarding the Role in the Regional Transportation System and Economy criterion, Kansier expressed concern with the Thrive 2040 job and education center maps, stating that many jobs are going to the suburbs and the maps do not acknowledge planned centers. She added that the transit work group had wanted to use traffic analysis zone data as opposed to census tract data. She said that scoring seems to be arbitrary for the peer route comparisons, particularly regarding defining what an appropriate peer route is. Peterson replied that there has been talk about giving deference to any potential peer route that makes sense. He added that this can be addressed in the scoring guidelines.

Regarding Equity and Housing Performance, Kansier said that the requirement for direct connections punishes those that try to connect to existing service. Peterson replied that crediting routes that connect to poverty areas via transfer would apply to all routes, rendering the equity measure unable to provide any differentiation.

Kansier said that transit has the largest equity percentage of all modes and that the racially concentrated areas of poverty (RCAPs), concentrated areas of poverty (CAPs), and environmental justice (EJ) areas do not reflect the prevalence of minorities and low-income people in the suburbs. Lux added that this comment also applied to roads, which can provide access to suburban jobs, a concept that has been ignored in this process.

Kansier suggested that the equity measure is not consistent with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which states that that system average, not the regional average must be reviewed. EDITOR'S NOTE: Metropolitan Council staff explored this question with the Federal Transit Administration, which confirmed that using regional averages is appropriate for an MPO-sponsored regional solicitation.

Regarding the fourth of four response bullets under equity, Mary Karlsson suggested clarification of the following language: "Project's service does not directly connect to one of these identified geographic areas listed in 1-3." She suggested that it is unclear whether "directly connect" relates to geography or allowance of transfer connections. Peterson said that it relates to geography. For Transit Expansion and Modernization, the language should be changed to "Project's service directly connects to a census tract that is below the regional average for population in poverty or populations of color or includes children, people with disabilities, or the elderly." For Roadways, Non-motorized, and Travel Demand Management, the language should be changed to "Project located in a census tract that is below the regional average for population in poverty or populations of color or includes children, people with disabilities, or the elderly."

Pedestrian Facilities

In the only measure under Role in the Regional Transportation System and Economy, Koutsoukos suggested changing the response language from "direct connection into, adjacent to, or within" to "direct connection into, on an adjacent street, or within" a job concentration, a manufacturing/distribution location, an educational institution, or an existing local activity center identified in an adopted county or city plan.

Percent Weighting of Points

Peterson discussed the draft percent weighting of points as proposed by the modal working groups and the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee included a higher weighting for Equity and Housing Performance in roadways and non-motorized applications compared to the work groups. Keel said that the Committee can recommend either weighting scenario or offer a third scenario of its own.

MOTION: Lyndon Robjent moved to recommend the elimination of equity as a criterion for all roadway applications. Seconded by Witter.

Lux asked for clarification regarding where the 10 percent of the points would be shifted to. Robjent replied that five percent would go to Role in the Regional Transportation System while five percent would go to Usage.

Keel said that he is concerned with using the housing score as a reward, as that is not related to the project. He added that he is comfortable with the Working Group recommendations, as they were formulated after a long process.

Koutsoukos said that EJ is a federal requirement, to which Kansier replied that this measure differs from the federal EJ requirements. Karlsson said that eliminating equity would be contrary to MAP-21 direction.

Isaacson said that if the solicitation is delayed the time constraints could become problematic. Karlsson added that falling behind the current schedule would result in projects not being selected in time for inclusion in the FY 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which would cause a need for TIP amendments.

Eyoh added that equity is one of the five desired outcomes of Thrive 2040.

The motion failed on a voice vote.

MOTION: Craig Jenson moved to recommend the Working Groups' point-weighting scenario. Seconded by Sass.

Kansier said she would rather see a smaller amount for equity in transit applications.

Karlsson said that she supported the Steering Committee recommendations. She said that the Metropolitan Council's Choice, Place, and Opportunity Report, which informed Thrive 2040 and the Draft 2040 Transportation

Policy Plan, found that the Twins Cities has some of the nation's biggest racial disparities. She added that it is an EJ violation not to include needs of disadvantaged groups. Kansier said that while members are interested in social justice, that the measures do not address equality everywhere.

Keel said that he will support the motion and that he favors equity over housing.

Filipi said that the regional solicitation should be a tool to implement regional policies and select the best projects. The Steering Committee is looking at the bigger picture, as evidenced by the emphasis toward the housing scores. He added that he has not seen a technical reason to change the Steering Committee's recommendations. He then reminded the members that after each solicitation, a review process is undertaken, leading to changes.

Robjent said that that while equity is important, it should not be used until a future solicitation when there are better measures.

The motion passed by a count of 11 to 6.

MOTION: Kansier moved to 1) reduce Equity and Housing Performance to 10 percent and increase Role in the Regional Transportation System and Economy to 20 percent for the Transit Expansion application and 2) reduce Equity and Housing Performance to 10 percent and increase Role in the Regional Transportation System and Economy to 15 percent for the Transit Modernization application. Seconded by Robjent.

Keel said that he would vote against the motion, as these measures showed consistency between the Transit Working Group and the Steering Committee.

Eyoh said that he will vote against the motion as he would prefer adjusting wording to reducing the Equity and Housing Performance measure.

The motion failed by a count of 11 to 6.

MOTION: Keel moved to have all Equity and Housing Performance measures weighed at 70 percent equity and 30 percent housing performance. Seconded by Robjent.

Thompson said that he preferred the approach of having more weight on project-specific criteria than municipality-based criteria.

The vote passed unanimously.

MOTION: Eyoh moved to recommend the solicitation to the TAC. Seconded by Isaacson. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Program Year Policy Revisions – Information Item

This item will be moved to September.

7. Other Business

None

8. Adjournment With no other business, the meeting adjourned.