



# **Transportation Planning and Programming Guide**

**for the Twin Cities  
Metropolitan Area**

**February  
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## Introduction

Large, U.S. metropolitan areas must have well-designed, carefully maintained transportation systems that encompass travel by all modes including automobile, bus, rail, bicycle, foot and airplane.

In every metropolitan area, an interconnected web of people and organizations work to set priorities, make plans, and implement projects that affect the region's transportation infrastructure. In the Twin Cities, the transportation planning process involves an interconnected group of local transportation officials and transportation agencies, relying on plans made by the federal government, the state, counties, cities and other transportation partners. It is driven by national, state, district, metropolitan and local plans and priorities.

### Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Federal regulations require that the mutual transportation planning responsibilities of the Metropolitan

Planning Organization (MPO), the state, and public transportation operator be incorporated into a written agreement—a memorandum of understanding. The MOU is signed by the Council and MnDOT and is updated at least once every four years.

The current MOU between the Council and MnDOT can be found at:

<http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/2008MOUBetweenMnDOTandMC.pdf>

This guide describes in more detail than the MOU the **Continuing, Comprehensive and Cooperative (3C)** Transportation Planning Process for the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The process provides a basis for decision making and ensures that transportation interests are balanced when public funds are spent. This guide describes the participants that create and maintain the Twin Cities transportation system, how those participants work together, the primary products and processes that define their work, the sources and allocation of funds to transportation

projects, how plans become programmed projects and the activities that support planning and programming.

A glossary of frequently used transportation planning terms can be found in the Appendix of the Transportation Policy Plan.

## Part 1: The Participants

Participants in the transportation planning process include:

- The Metropolitan Council (the Council)
- The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) and its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
- The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC)
- Transit Providers
- Counties and Cities
- Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB)

- County Regional Railroad Authorities
- Private Citizens
- The U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT)
- Other Agencies

With the exception of the TAB and TAC, each of these entities has roles and responsibilities in addition to transportation planning. This guide will describe their roles only the in the transportation planning process.

### Metropolitan Council

Federal law requires that federal transportation project and program funds are selected by the state or by state-designated **metropolitan planning organizations**, which represent areas with a population of 50,000 or more. These organizations, known as **MPOs**, develop transportation plans and programs based on the “3C” planning process carried out with state and local communities.

Created in 1967, the Metropolitan Council (“the Council”) is the designated MPO for the seven-county Twin Cities area, which includes

Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington Counties. (It is also Minnesota’s only Transportation Management Area, or TMA, a designation for MPOs in areas with more than 200,000 residents.)

The Council has 17 members, all appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate. Sixteen members each represent individual geographic districts; the chairperson serves at large.

**Figure 1** shows the Council’s Policymaking Structure

The Council develops the **Regional Development Framework (RDF)** that includes policies for shaping future growth and provides direction to the four system policy plans: transportation, aviation, parks and water resources.

The Council’s role in transportation planning and programming is multifaceted. It includes:

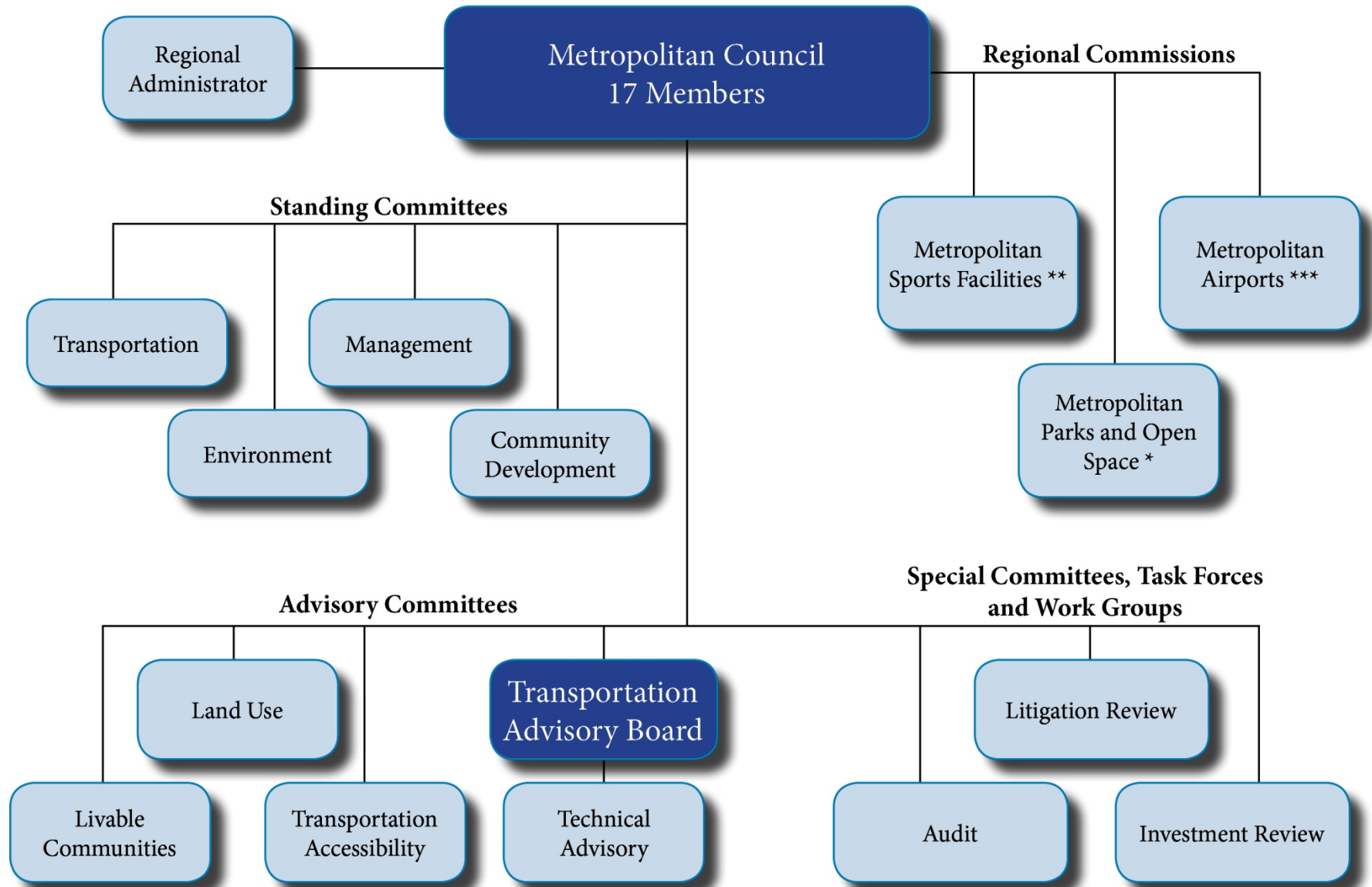
- Conducting studies and preparing planning documents that guide agencies that plan for and

operate highways, transit and airports.

These documents and studies include:

- The Transportation Policy Plan (TPP), which includes plans for the metropolitan highway, regional transit, and aviation systems;
  - The four-year, multi-modal Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a program of highway, transit, bike, walking, and transportation enhancement initiatives proposed for Federal funding;
  - The congestion management system, a process for evaluating and developing strategies that manage existing and expected future traffic congestion.
- Deciding whether plans and programs conform to Clean Air Act requirements.

**Figure 1 – Metropolitan Council Policymaking Structure**



\* Staff support provided to Commission by Metropolitan Council.  
 \*\* The Metropolitan Council has budget approval and issues bonds for the commission  
 \*\*\* The Metropolitan Council reviews the capital budget and approves certain projects.

- Classifying roadways as part of the metropolitan highway system and/or transit service before design and operational guidelines are implemented.
- Reviewing and approving applications for federal and state funds and assuring these applications are consistent with the stated goals and policies of the RDF and the Transportation Policy Plan.
- Reviewing local communities' long-range plans to make sure they are consistent with regional system plans.

In addition to these transportation planning roles, the Council also:

- Operates much of the public transit regular route system through Metro Transit and private contractors.
- Operates Metro Mobility ADA and Transit Link dial-a-ride through contracts.
- Administers transit contracts.
- Coordinates with suburban transit authorities.

- Administers state and metropolitan transit operating funds.
- Promotes ride sharing.
- Offers local governments, regional railroad authorities, other public agencies and transit providers, advice and technical help on transit service coordination.
- Collects for and distributes from a revolving loan fund for buying highway rights of way.

See more about the Metropolitan Council:  
<http://www.metrocouncil.org/index.htm>

#### **Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)**

A number of boards are advisory to the Metropolitan Council. The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) is one of these. Federal law requires that in order for a region to receive Federal transportation funding, elected officials must serve on a metropolitan planning organization. Minnesota's governor appoints Metropolitan Council

members. TAB members, by contrast, include city and county *elected* officials within the seven-county area. Combining the Council and the TAB into a single certified metropolitan planning organization allows for a broader discussion of transportation issues, while also fulfilling federal law and allowing for receipt of federal transportation dollars.

The TAB consists of 33 members: ten elected city officials; one member from the board of each county in the metropolitan area; the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation; the Commissioner of the Pollution Control Agency; one member of the Metropolitan Airports Commission; one person appointed by the Council to represent non-motorized transportation; one member representing the freight transportation industry; two members representing public transit; one "citizen" representative from each Metropolitan Council district (for a total of eight); and one Metropolitan Council member. The TAB chair is appointed by the Council from among the 33 members.

The TAB works closely with the Council, reviewing, commenting on and coordinating transportation planning and programming activities. A key responsibility of the Council's TAB is to solicit and evaluate project applications for funding from four federal programs.

See more about the TAB:

<http://www.metrocouncil.org/about/TAB.htm>

The TAB operates with three standing sub-committees: executive, policy, and programming. The TAB receives technical input from its Technical Advisory Committee. The relationship of these committees is shown in **Figure 2**.

### **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to the TAB**

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) also works closely with the TAB and the Council. Composed of 29 professional staff from city and county governments and the agencies involved in transportation in the seven-county region, the TAC provides technical expertise to the TAB. The TAC has two standing

committees, the Funding and Programming Committee and the Planning Committee as well as *ad hoc* multimodal task forces.

See more about the TAC:  
[CREATE](#) and [link to WEBPAGE](#)

### **Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)**

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is the state's principal agency for developing and implementing state transportation plans and programs. MnDOT builds and maintains state and interstate highways, conducts statewide multimodal transportation planning, and allocates funding to various projects. MnDOT also approves the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which incorporates the Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) from the various metropolitan areas within the state. MnDOT's Statewide Transportation Plan guides the MnDOT District plans. MnDOT Metro District's plan addresses performance needs in the metropolitan area and reflects the policies and incorporates the plans made by the metropolitan planning

organization. These plans address preservation, safety, management of the existing system, and other capital improvements that increase system capacity.

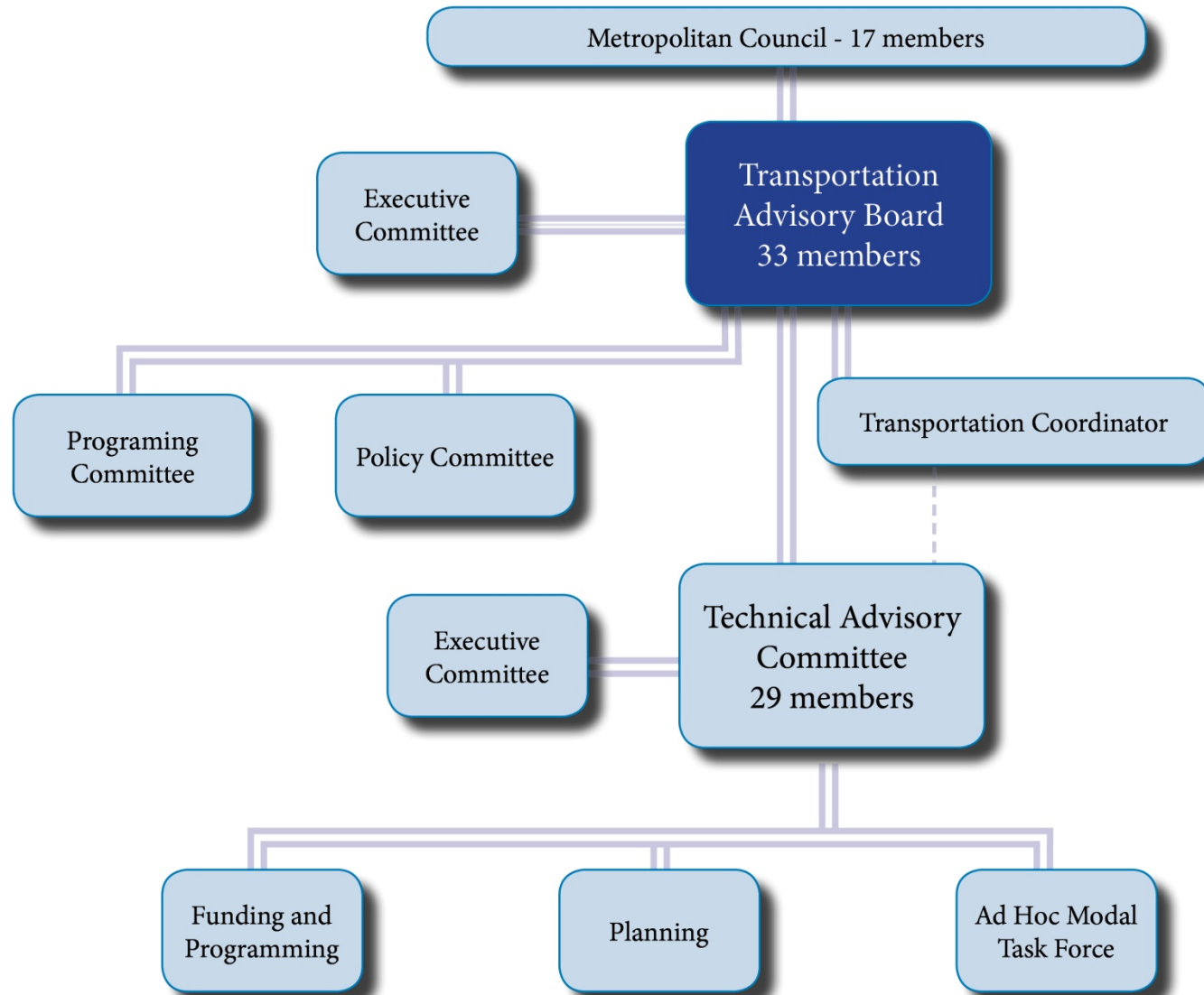
MnDOT plays an integral part in the Twin Cities metropolitan planning process, serves as the liaison between the metropolitan planning organization and the U.S. Department of Transportation, and participates in the Air Quality Conformity Process.

See more about MnDOT' transportation planning responsibilities:  
[Need link from MnDOT](#)

### **Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)**

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) helps Minnesotans protect, conserve, and improve the state's environment. The agency proposes a variety of plans and measurements to monitor pollution and keep it within Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) limits. It also guides the MPO in fulfilling environmental requirements and advises on how transportation and

**Figure 2 - Transportation Advisory Board**





transit projects will affect Minnesota's compliance with environmental regulations.

See more about the MPCA:

<http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/air/index.html>

### **Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC)**

The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) is a special-purpose agency with broad powers to acquire, develop, and operate airports within a district that approximates the seven-county metropolitan area. It owns and operates seven public-use airports, and can raise money to finance airport development and operations. MAC answers directly to the state legislature, but its long-range plans must be consistent with Metropolitan Council plans and policies. Moreover, specific airport development projects of \$5 million or more at the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport and \$1 million at other airports must have Council approval.

See more about the Metropolitan Airports Commission:

<http://www.metroairports.org/mac/default.aspx>

### **Transit Providers**

The Council operates **Metro Transit**, the largest transit system in the state. In addition to the largest bus system, the Council operates **METRO**, an expanding network of transitways that includes the Blue Line (Hiawatha), the Green Line (Central Corridor) and the Green Line Extension (Southwest) light rail transit lines and the Red Line (Cedar Avenue) and the Orange Line (I-35W south) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines. Northstar Commuter Rail is also part of the expanding transitway system but offers a limited number of trips and operates only during the morning and afternoon rush hours weekday and on weekends.

The Council also administers a number of specialized transit services: **Metro Mobility**, a transportation service for those unable to use regular fixed-route service due to a disability or health condition; **Transit Link**, dial-a-ride

type transportation service for those traveling to places in the region where regular fixed-route service is not provided and **Metro Vanpool**, a subsidized vanpool program for commuters not served by regular fixed-route service.

### **Suburban Transit Providers**

operate their own regular-route bus services in about a dozen cities within the Council's transit taxing district. These public transit operators give their input to the transportation planning process through the TAB's TAC. They are also involved with the Council through the region-wide fare collection system, bus lease agreements, grant agreements for bus storage facilities, bus shelters, and regular-route transit services. Transit providers participate in the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), development of the regional fare structure and the Regional Service Improvement Plan.

### **Counties and Municipalities**

Metropolitan area counties and cities participate in transportation planning at two levels. At the policy

level, elected county and city officers serve on the TAB. At the technical level, professional staffs from area governments serve on the TAC.

### **Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB)**

CTIB operates under a Joint Powers Agreement of five counties and the Council as authorized in state legislation in 2008. Since then, the five counties – Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington – have utilized a quarter-cent sales tax and a \$20 motor vehicle sales tax to invest in and advance transit projects by awarding annual capital and operating grants. CTIB works in collaboration with the Council. Carver and Scott counties are *ex officio* members of CTIB.

See more about CTIB:  
<http://www.mnrides.org/about>

### **County Regional Railroad Authorities**

A 1980 state law allows Minnesota counties to form Regional Railroad Authorities (RRAs) to preserve and improve local rail service and

provide for the preservation of abandoned rail right-of-way for future transportation functions. Each of the seven counties in the metropolitan area has formed its own Regional Railroad Authority.

### **Private Citizens**

Twin Cities residents are encouraged to participate in the transportation planning process. Advisory committees, boards, and commissions associated with the Council's planning responsibilities have an open appointment policy, and meetings are open to anyone. Informational meetings, workshops, and public hearings are open to the public; and all policy documents are posted on the Council's website.

See more about public involvement in transportation planning at the Council:  
<http://www.metrocouncil.org/transit/index.htm>

### **U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)**

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) is a Federal

Government agency that funds, sets policy for safety, and provides other guidance for transportation by air, highways, rail, transit, and water. The USDOT includes the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which maintains a local office and actively participates in regional planning, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Both FHWA and FTA establish the regulations that govern the development of an urban area's transportation plans and programs. Together, these two organizations review the Council's Transportation Policy Plan (TPP), MnDOT's State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and the Council's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The two administrations also certify the 3-C metropolitan transportation planning process. The US DOT is the primary funding source for metropolitan transportation planning.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) develops the National Plan for an Integrated Airport System,

approves and funds planning and development projects, operates and maintains the national air traffic control system, certifies aircraft and pilots, and establishes and enforces flight operation rules. Metropolitan Airport Commission policies must be in keeping with both Metropolitan Council plans and those of the FAA.

### Other Agencies

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the State Historic Preservation Office, and tribal governments also participate in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

## Part 2: Transportation-related Planning Documents

Major transportation-related planning documents include:

- The Regional Development Framework
- Transportation Policy Plan, (TPP), which includes the Aviation Plan
- The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

- The Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan
- Metro District 20-year Highway Investment Plan

**Figure 3** describes the roles of the various agencies in the preparation of the three federally mandated plans and programs.

### Regional Development Framework

The Council is required by state statute to prepare the Regional Development Framework. The Framework sets out the regional forecasts for population, households and employment. It provides the regional physical and policy framework, which forms the basis for the type, location, investment priorities, and general implementation and review procedures for metropolitan transportation systems. The Framework is the first chapter of the Comprehensive Development Guide, which includes the Transportation Policy Plan, the Water Resources Management Plan and the Regional Parks and Open Space Plan.

See more about the **Regional Development Framework**:

<http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/framework/documents.htm>

### Transportation Policy Plan (TPP)

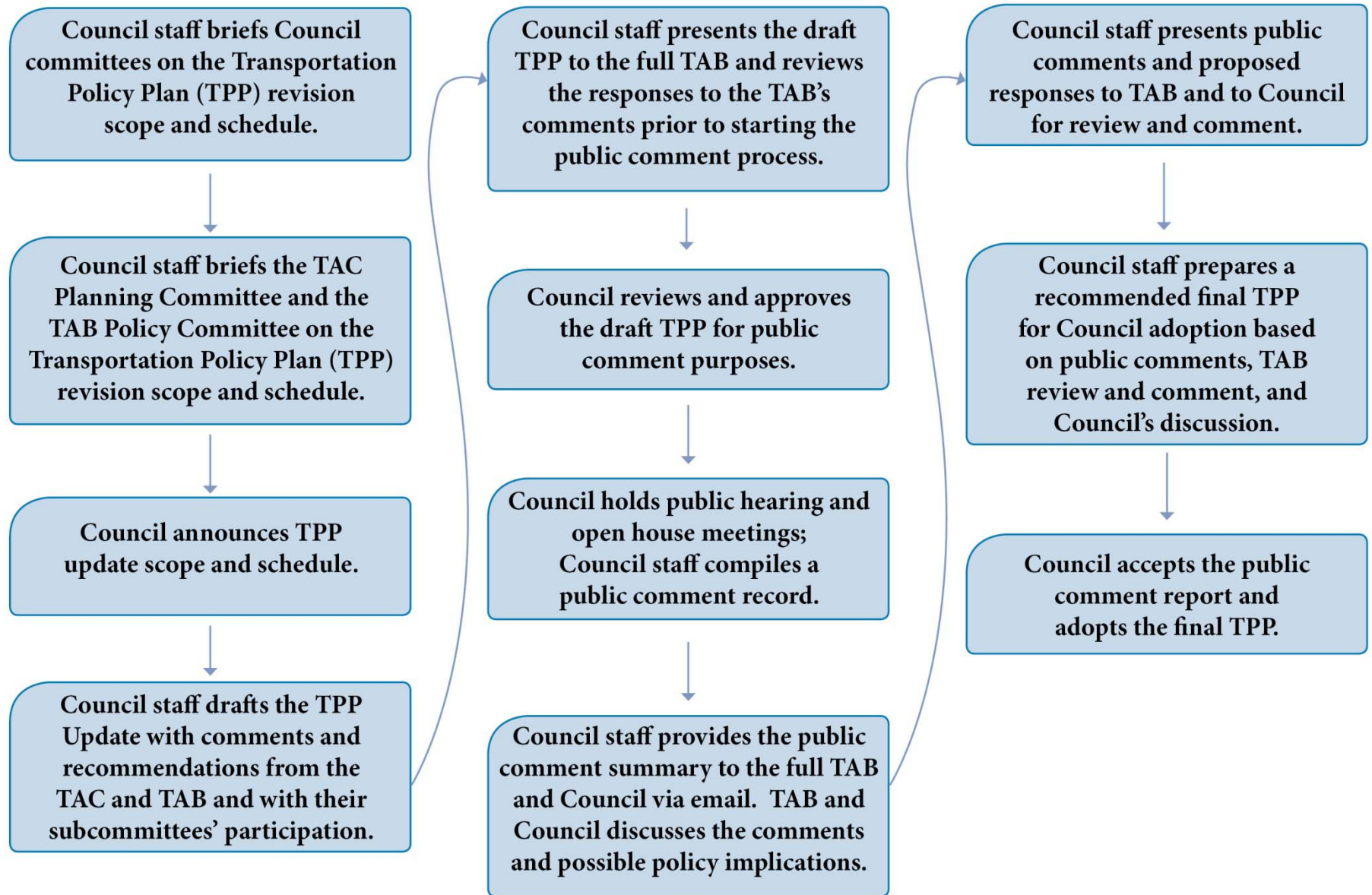
The TPP is a federally required plan that is prepared and updated on a four- year cycle by the Council. The TPP describes the region's approach to metropolitan transportation investments for at least the next 20 years. The transportation plan is one chapter of the Council's Regional Development Framework. The TPP also addresses federal transportation planning requirements and Clean Air Act concerns, major studies conducted since the last update, and the funds available to maintain or replace highways and other transportation infrastructure. The plan must balance planned investments against reasonably expected resources; it must also produce cleaner air or meet the emission budget.

**Figure 4** illustrates how the TPP develops from initiation to adoption.

**Figure 3 – Federally Mandated Transportation Plan Interagency Participation Chart**

	Transportation Policy Plan	Transportation Improvement Program	Unified Planning Work Program
<b>Metropolitan Council</b>	Prepares and approves TPP	Lead agency in preparing and approving TIP. Forwards document to MnDOT for inclusion in STIP	Prepares and approves UPWP. Submits UPWP to MnDOT to forward to US DOT
<b>Transportation Advisory Board</b>	Participates in plan development. Reviews and comments on documents	Conducts regional project solicitation for incorporation into TIP. Adopts TIP	Reviews and comments on UPWP to Council.
<b>Technical Advisory Committee</b>	Participates in plan development. Reviews and comments on document to TAB	Facilitates regional solicitation process for TAB. Recommends Projects for inclusion in TIP and recommends TIP to TAB for adoption.	Reviews and comments on UPWP to TAB.
<b>MnDOT</b>	Participates in TAC/TAB review and comments. May comment directly to Council.	Provides region with federal funding target; facilitates minor changes in TIP/STIP; Metro District assists Council in TIP development. Participates in TIP review and adoption through TAC/TAB; Central Office incorporates the TIP into STIP; and approves the STIP as governor's designee. Then submits to US DOT for approval	Prepares agency work program components for inclusion in UPWP; participates in TAC/TAB review; Submits UPWP to US DOT for approval; Can comment directly to Council
<b>MPCA</b>	Participates in TAC/TAB review and comment. May comment directly to Council.	Participates in TIP review/adoption process through TAC.TAB; reviews and comments to TAB and/or Council	Prepares agency work program component for inclusion in UPWP; participates in TAC/TAB review; May comment directly to Council.
<b>MAC</b>	Participates in TAC/TAB review and comment. May comment directly to Council.	Review and comments through TAC/TAB; may comment directly to TAB or Council	Prepares agency work program component for inclusion in UPWP; participates in TAC/TAB review; May comment directly to Council.
<b>Local Governments</b>	Reviews and comments through TAC/TAB. May comment directly to Council	Review and comments through TAC/TAB; may comment directly to TAB or Council	Reviews and comments through TAC/TAB
<b>Transit Providers</b>	Review and comment through TAC subcommittee. May comment directly to Council.	Review and comments through TAC/TAB; may comment directly to TAB or Council	Comments directly to Council
<b>CTIB</b>	Provide review and comment directly to Council		
<b>Regional Railroad Authorities</b>	Provide review and comment directly to Council		
<b>US DOT</b>	Participates as non-voting member in TAC review and comment to TAB. FHWA and FTA must make conformity determination that plan is in accordance with Clean Air Act and EPA regulations	Participates as non-voting member in TAC review and comment to TAB. FHWA and FTA must make conformity determination that plan is in accordance with Clean Air Act and EPA regulations; must find TIP is based on 3C process carried out with state, MPO and transit operations; FHWA and FTA must jointly find that TIP conforms with adopted SIP and that priority given to timely implementation control measures contained in SIP.	Reviews and approves UPWP

**Figure 4 – Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) Update Process**



See the **Transportation Policy Plan**:  
<http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/TPP/2010/index.htm>

### **Aviation Plan**

The Council, working with MAC, airport users, owners, affected communities, and MnDOT, writes the aviation plan element of the Transportation Policy Plan. It includes goals, policies, review criteria, guidelines, coordination, and implementation procedures, as well as an airports system plan.

See the **Aviation Plan**:  
[http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/TPP/2010/10\\_Aviation.pdf](http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/TPP/2010/10_Aviation.pdf)

### **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

The UPWP is a federally required description and documentation of proposed transportation and transportation-related planning activities in the metropolitan area. The UPWP also serves as the Council's application for US DOT transportation planning funds.

The UPWP is prepared annually and describes metropolitan-area transportation planning activities being undertaken by four agencies: the Metropolitan Council, MnDOT, MPCA and MAC.

**Figure 5** illustrates how the UPWP develops from initiation to adoption.

See the **Unified Planning Work Program**:  
<http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/UnifiedPlanningWorkProgram.pdf>

### **Minnesota Go Vision**

The Minnesota Department of Transportation completed the **Minnesota GO visioning process** in 2011 to better align the transportation system with what Minnesotans expect for their quality of life, economy and natural environment. The Vision is a description of a desired future fifty years hence. It answers the question "what are we trying to achieve?" It does not answer the question "how will we do it?"—this latter question is addressed in subsequent

statewide, modal and regional planning efforts.

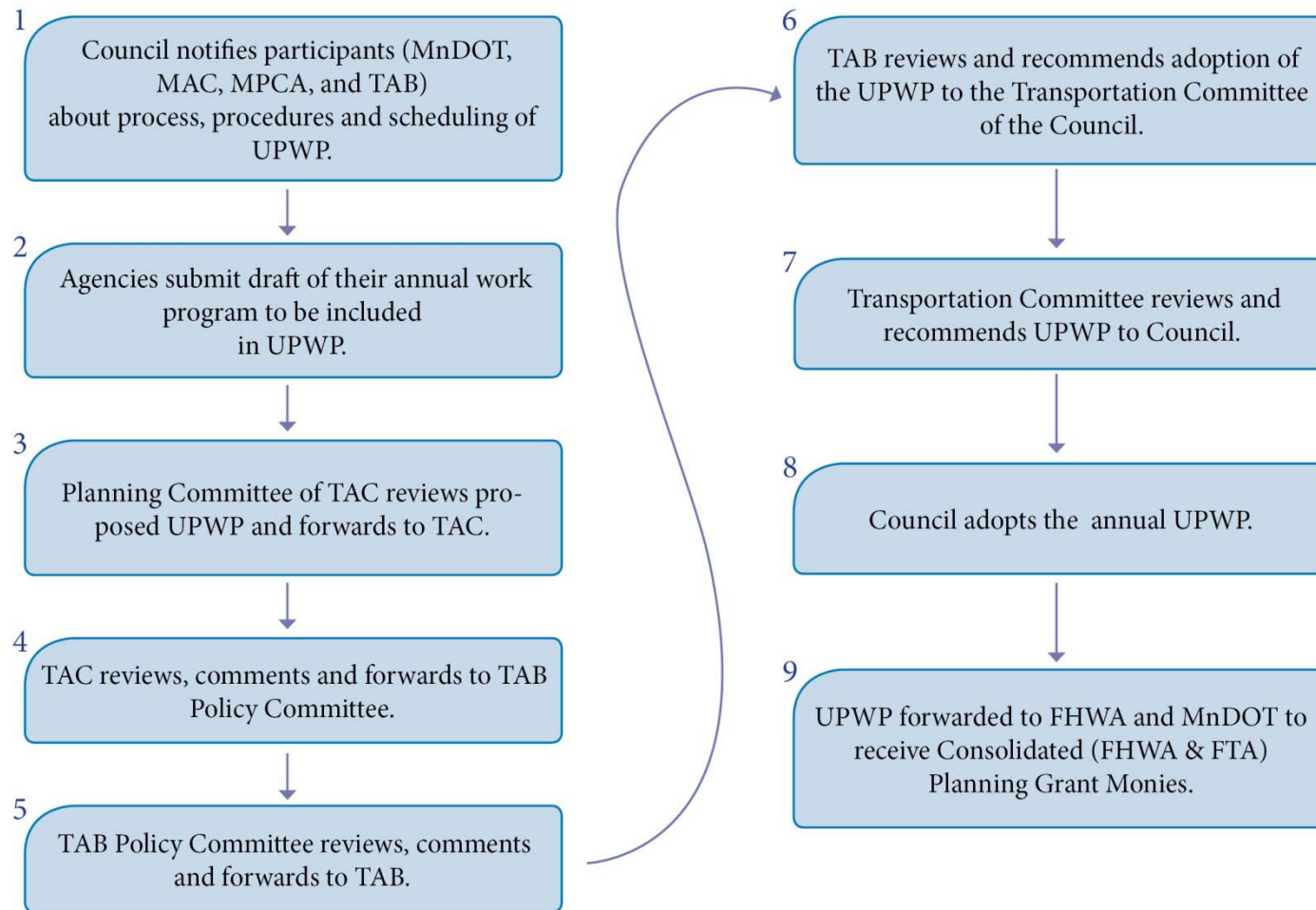
The Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan serves as the framework plan for MnDOT's family of plans, or the modal plans. This multimodal plan establishes guidance and priorities for state transportation decisions, which filter down into specific plans for each mode, and into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which identifies priority projects and how money will be spent. To keep pace with changing priorities, opportunities, and challenges, the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan and the different modal plans are updated every 4 to 6 years.

The Statewide Multimodal Plan and MnDOT's Metro District 20-Year Highway Investment Plan are discussed in more detail below.

### **Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan**

Development of a Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan per Minnesota Statute 174.03 is an

**Figure 5 - Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Process**



integral element in the overall MnDOT planning process. The statewide plan must be updated every four years. The plan establishes overarching guidance and priorities for making state transportation decisions across all modes—from roadways, to railroads, to bikeways, and beyond. The plan focuses on activities over a 20-year time frame. The plan is intended for use as a guidance document for local and regional planning efforts so the input of these groups is important. Within MnDOT, the plan guides future modal system and investment decisions, such as the State Aviation System Plan and the Highway Investment Plan.

See more about Minnesota GO and the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan:  
[www.minnesotagoplan.org](http://www.minnesotagoplan.org)

### **Metropolitan District 20-Year Highway Investment Plan**

MnDOT's Metro District created the 20-Year Highway Investment Plan as a guide to future investments in the state trunk highway system within

the Metro District's eight-county metropolitan area.

The document reflects Federal, state, and regional policies as well as priorities and projected funding availability as it identifies the long-term system and corridor improvements necessary to achieve and maintain established performance targets. The 20-Year Highway Investment Plan must also reflect the investment goals and policies of the Metropolitan Council's Development Framework and its TPP.

See more about the investment and policy guidance used to develop the 20-year investment plan:  
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/programmanagement/>

### **Part 3: Funding and the Programming Process**

Programming is the process of selecting projects and investments to be made over a period of time and identifying and committing funds to those projects.

MnDOT and the Council develop long-range policy plans typically done over a period of twenty years. Consistent with the long-range policy plans, MnDOT develops statewide and district specific investment plans. Cities, counties and transit providers also develop their own capital investment plans.

### **Federal Funding Overview**

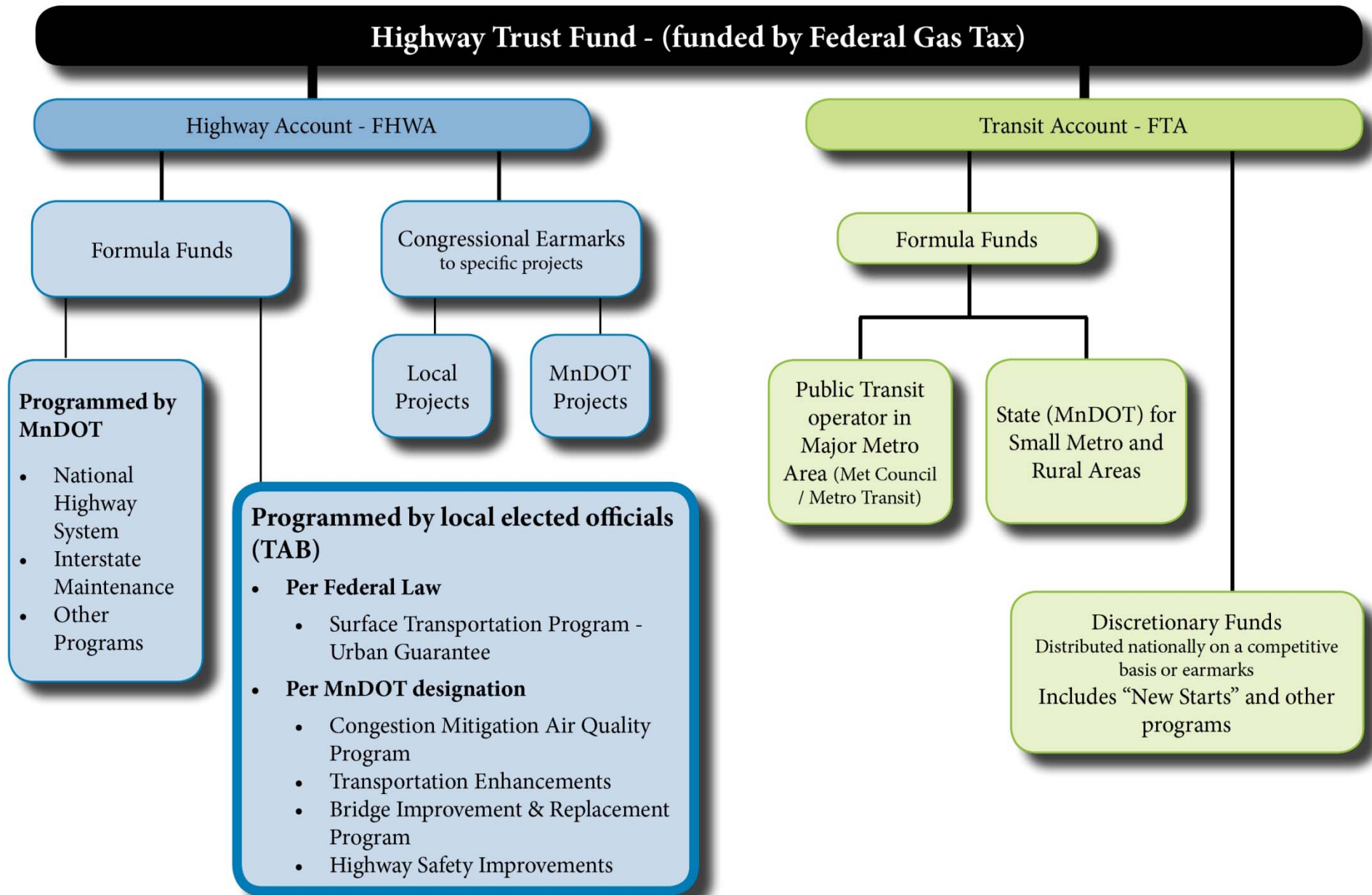
Figure 6 is a simplified illustration of how federal funds for highways and transit are distributed in the Twin Cities area.

Minnesota annually receives Federal aid money from the Highway Trust Fund-- which is funded by the federal gas tax-- to spend on highways and transit.

*Federal highway funds* are distributed as either formula funds or congressional earmarks.



**Figure 6 - Simplified Federal Highway Trust Fund Distribution in Twin Cities**



### *Highway Formula Funds*

The majority of the funds that are distributed by federal formula to the state of Minnesota are spent by MnDOT on more than 60 programs including the National Highway System, and the Interstate Maintenance Program.

In Minnesota, selecting projects for funding occurs both centrally at the statewide level and through the **Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs)**. ATPs were established at the MnDOT district level to create a more collaborative decision making process between the Districts and stakeholders such as the MPOs, Cities and Counties, and Tribal Governments for the selection of roadway projects receiving federal funds. The Council and its TAB serve as the ATP in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

These funds are distributed through MnDOT to the ATPs according to performance based variables and target formulas, based on MnDOT's priorities of preservation, mobility and safety.

The federal aid programs for which TAB allocates funds are determined by agreement between MnDOT and the TAB/Council. These include the **Surface Transportation Program-Urban Guarantee (STP-UG)** federal formula funds that are allocated directly from FHWA to the MPO. In addition to the STP-UG funds, MnDOT has designated four other formula-funded programs to TAB for allocation and programming—Congestion Mitigation Air Quality; Transportation Enhancements; Bridge Improvement and Replacement, and Highway Safety Improvements.

TAB allocates these federal transportation funds through the regional solicitation process and reviews, amends and adopts the region's four-year transportation program

MnDOT's Metro District selects projects for specific federal programs and state trunk highway funds in a manner consistent with established investment strategies, the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan and the Regional TPP. These projects are

then incorporated into the TIP along with projects selected by TAB.

### *Congressional Earmarks*

Like other states, Minnesota may receive congressionally designated high-priority or earmarked project funding. These funds are designated for specific local or MnDOT projects. The Council and the TAB are not directly involved in the allocation of these funds.

### *Transit Formula Funds*

As shown in Figure 6, **Federal transit funds** are distributed through the FTA as either formula or discretionary funds. Formula transit funds are allocated to the Public Transit Operator in the major metropolitan areas (in this MPO it is the Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit) and to MnDOT for small metropolitan and rural areas. The TAB does not participate in the allocation of federal transit funds.

### *Discretionary Transit Funds*

Discretionary transit funds are distributed nationally on a

competitive basis and as earmarks for specific projects or programs. The Council and the TAB are not directly involved in the allocation of these funds.

### **Regional Solicitation for Federal funding of transportation projects**

The regional solicitation of project applications for federal transportation funding is a key biennial responsibility of the Council's TAB. Through this process federal funds can be directed to a variety of locally-initiated projects that address transportation problems and help implement regional transportation and development policies.

Federal funds are available for roadway, bridge, transit capital and operating, and bike and pedestrian projects. The Council, MnDOT, other transit providers, local governments and other agencies such as the MPCA may all submit project proposals.

The criteria for evaluating project applications and the solicitation process itself are updated biennially through the 3C process and are

adopted by the TAB. Projects are solicited, reviewed, scored and ranked through this process. The TAB directs staff to include the selected projects in the next draft of the Transportation Improvement Program.

**Figure 7** illustrates the Regional Solicitation project selection process.

**See more about the Solicitation Process:**

<http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/regsollicit.htm>.

### **The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

The TIP is a staged, four- year, multimodal program of highway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian and transportation enhancement projects and programs proposed for federal funding throughout the seven county metropolitan area. The TIP is a federally-required document that must be fiscally constrained. The MPO is required to prepare the TIP as a short-range programming document that complements its long-range transportation plan.

The Council prepares the TIP in cooperation with MnDOT. The TIP includes federal funds allocated through the regional solicitation process, and federal formula funds programmed by MnDOT, the Council and transit providers.

The projects contained in the TIP must be consistent with and implement the region's transportation plan and priorities as well as the State Implementation Plan for air quality.

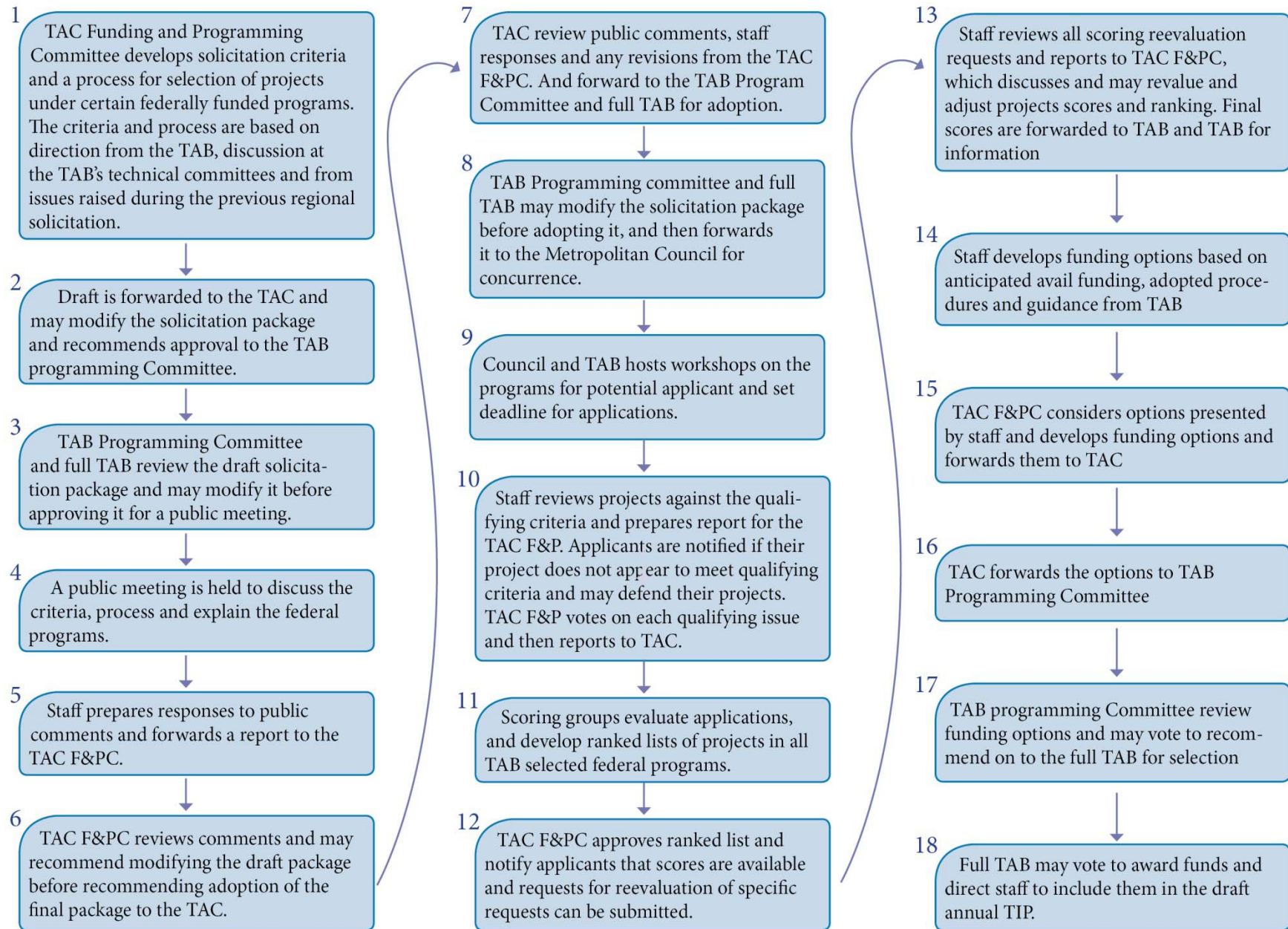
#### *TIP Management*

The TIP is adopted annually, generally in the fall of each year. Occasionally it may be necessary to make TIP project changes that cannot be deferred to the following adoption cycle. Changes in project scope and changes to the project's sunset date are the two most common reasons requiring a TIP amendment.

- *Scope Changes*

Projects that receive funding through the regional solicitation process are subject to a regionally

**Figure 7 – Regional Solicitation Process**



purpose of this policy is to ensure that the project is designed and constructed according to the plans and intent described in the original application. Additionally federal rules require that any federally funded project scope must go through a formal review and TIP amendment process if the project description or total project cost change substantially. The scope change policy and process allows project sponsors to make adjustments to their project as needed while still providing substantially the same benefits described in the original application.

**See the Scope Change Policy:**  
[Need Link](#)

- *Sunset Date Extensions*

Projects awarded federal transportation funds through the regional solicitation process have a sunset date of March 31 of the year following the original program year. The sunset date is the date when the federal funds are no longer available to the project sponsor. The sunset date

is a regional policy intended to be an incentive for project sponsors to get their project ready for authorization in a timely manner. Adopted policy allows project sponsors to extend the sunset date due to unforeseen circumstances, provided the sponsor has been working on project development.

**See the Sunset Date Extension policy:**  
[Need link.](#)

- *Other TIP Amendments*

In addition to scope changes and sunset date extensions, the TIP is also amended at the request of a project sponsor when projects receive new funding from earmarks or competitive funding sources that were not anticipated when the fiscally constrained TIP was adopted. MnDOT may also request a TIP amendment to reflect changes in project development progress.

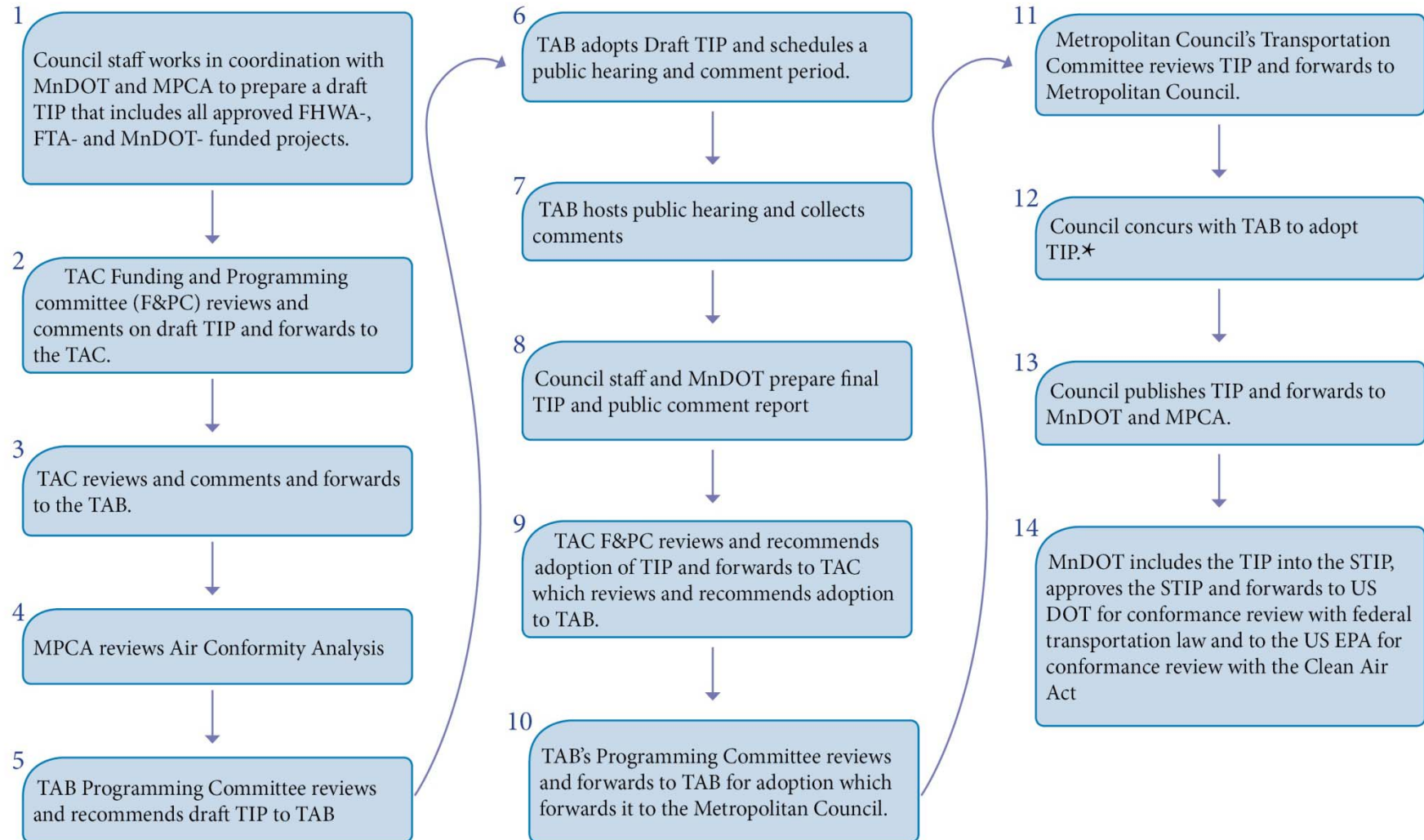
**Figure 8** illustrates the development of the TIP from initiation to federal approval.

### **State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)**

TIP projects are incorporated into the STIP, Minnesota's statewide four-year transportation improvement program. The STIP identifies the schedule and funding of transportation projects by state fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). It includes all state and local transportation projects with federal highway and/or federal transit funding. Rail, port, and aeronautic projects are included for information purposes. The STIP is developed and updated on an annual basis and must be approved by FHWA and FTA.

**See more about the current STIP:**  
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/stip.html>

**Figure 8 – Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Process**



\* Although final approval rests with the Metropolitan Council, the TAB's action will be changed only if the Council finds the TIP inconsistent with Council policy.

## Part 4: Activities that support planning and programming

A number of federal and state requirements and procedures support transportation planning and programming activities. As with the major planning and programming documents, various agencies and individuals participate in these required supportive activities.

### Federal requirements include:

- The Congestion Management Process
- The Air Quality Conformity Determination Process
- Functional Highway Classification Process
- The Travel Forecasting Process
- The Public Participation Plan

### *Congestion Management Process (CMP)*

Under Federal law, metropolitan planning organizations in areas with populations over 200,000 must

develop a CMP that manages traffic congestion and provides information on transportation system performance. A CMP must: measure multi-modal transportation system performance, identify the causes of congestion; assess alternative actions; implement cost-effective actions and evaluate the effectiveness of those actions. The CMP incorporates and coordinates the various activities of the Council, MnDOT, transit providers, counties, cities and Transportation Management organizations to increase the efficiency of the multimodal transportation system, reduce vehicle use and provide lower-cost safety and mobility projects where feasible.

The CMP is incorporated into Chapter 5 of the TPP. The CMP emphasizes four approaches to address regional congestion: freeway system management; travel demand management; transit opportunities and land use policy.

See more about the Congestion Management Process:

[http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/TPP/2010/5\\_RegMobility.pdf](http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/TPP/2010/5_RegMobility.pdf)

### *Air Quality Conformity Determination*

The Federal Clean Air Act Amendments passed in 1990 stipulate that transportation plans, programs, and projects in non-attainment and maintenance areas must undergo an air quality conformity analysis. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency designates the seven county metropolitan area and a portion of Wright County adjacent to the metropolitan area, as a maintenance area for carbon monoxide emissions, so transportation plans, projects, and programs are subject to that air quality analysis.

An interagency committee involving the Council, MnDOT, the EPA, and the MPCA, plus (sometimes) local transportation agencies, work together to ensure that Minnesota's transportation plans conform to air quality standards. The Council, however, also makes its own

assessment, using technical data, assumptions based on such things as transportation modeling and emissions analysis, and transportation control measures to show whether or not its transportation plans will conform to air quality standards.

Conformity determinations are subject to public review and comment before agencies take any formal action. The information, emissions data, analyses, models and modeling assumptions used to determine conformity is public information available from the Council.

**Figure 9** illustrates the Air Quality Conformity Determination Process

#### *Functional Highway Classification Process*

Roadways are classified according to their primary function—mobility for through trips or access to adjacent lands. A Federal requirement, the Functional Highway Classification Process, relies on functional classification to determine which roads will be part of the metropolitan

highway system. Functional classification is also used to determine if federal highway funds can be spent on the highway or road and helps establish priorities for Federal funding allocated through the Council and the TAB.

This process takes place under the authority of the TAB and its associated committees. The TAB works within federally suggested limits on principal arterial, minor arterial, and collector road mileage; it also takes into account local city and county functional classification systems.

In classifying highway functions, the Council decides what function a roadway should perform. State or local jurisdiction determines roadway width, speed limits, intersection controls, or other design features. The results help classify roads into one of four categories: principal arterials (which include interstate freeways), minor arterials, collector streets, and local streets.

**Figure 10** illustrates the Functional Highway Classification Process for Minor Arterials and Collectors.

See more about the **Functional Highway Classification Process**:  
<http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/FuncRdwyClass/index.htm>

#### *The Travel Forecasting Process*

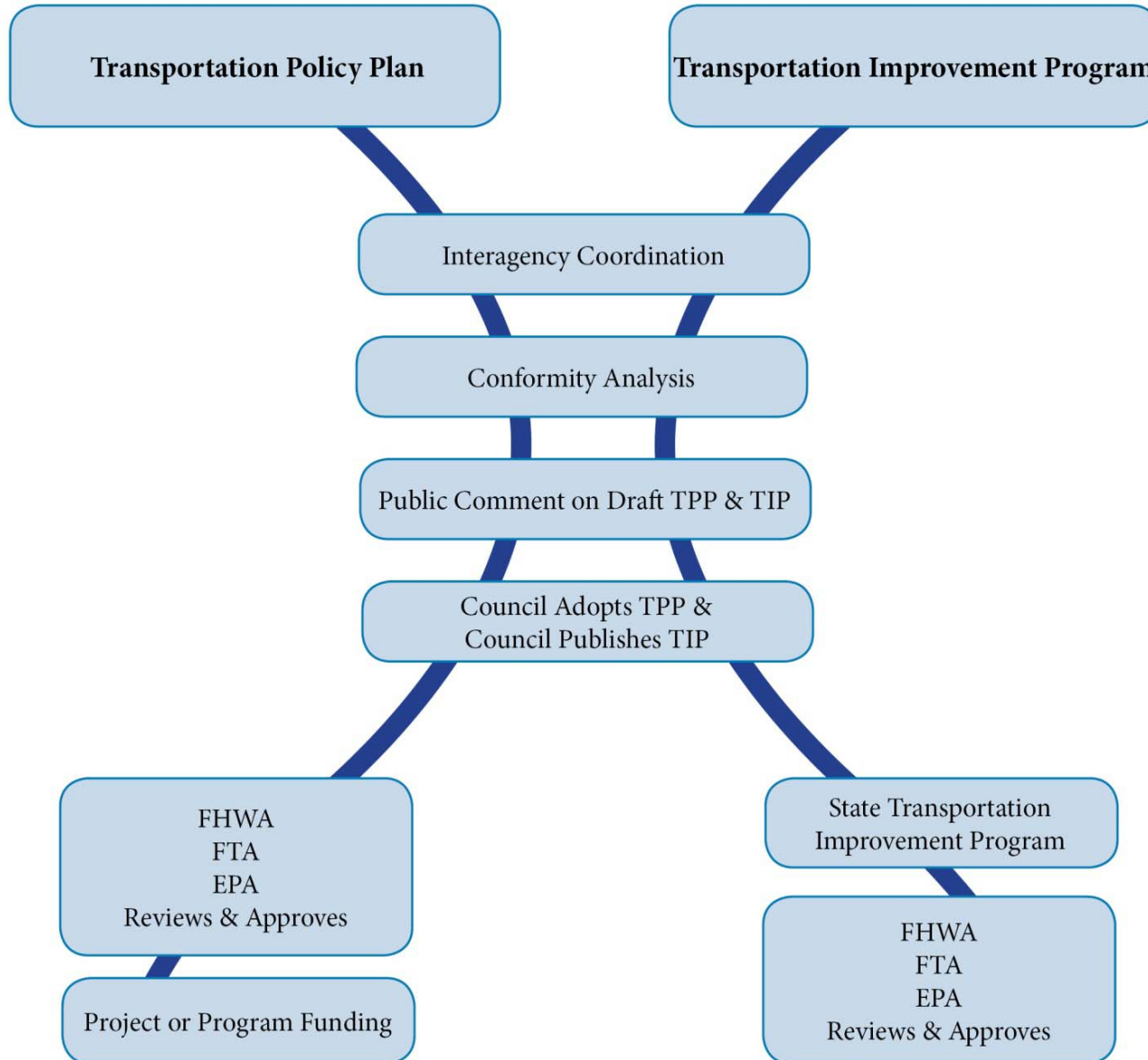
The Council, acting in its role as the federally recognized MPO, is responsible for ensuring that high quality, consistent and defensible travel forecasts are completed for all transportation projects in the Twin Cities region, including transitway projects. Travel forecasts are also used in the Air Quality Conformity Determination Process.

The Council maintains a multi-modal transportation forecasting model that uses a classic, four-step travel demand modeling process. Every 10 years a regional **Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI)** is conducted and the wealth of information collected from the TBI is used to update the regional travel forecasts.

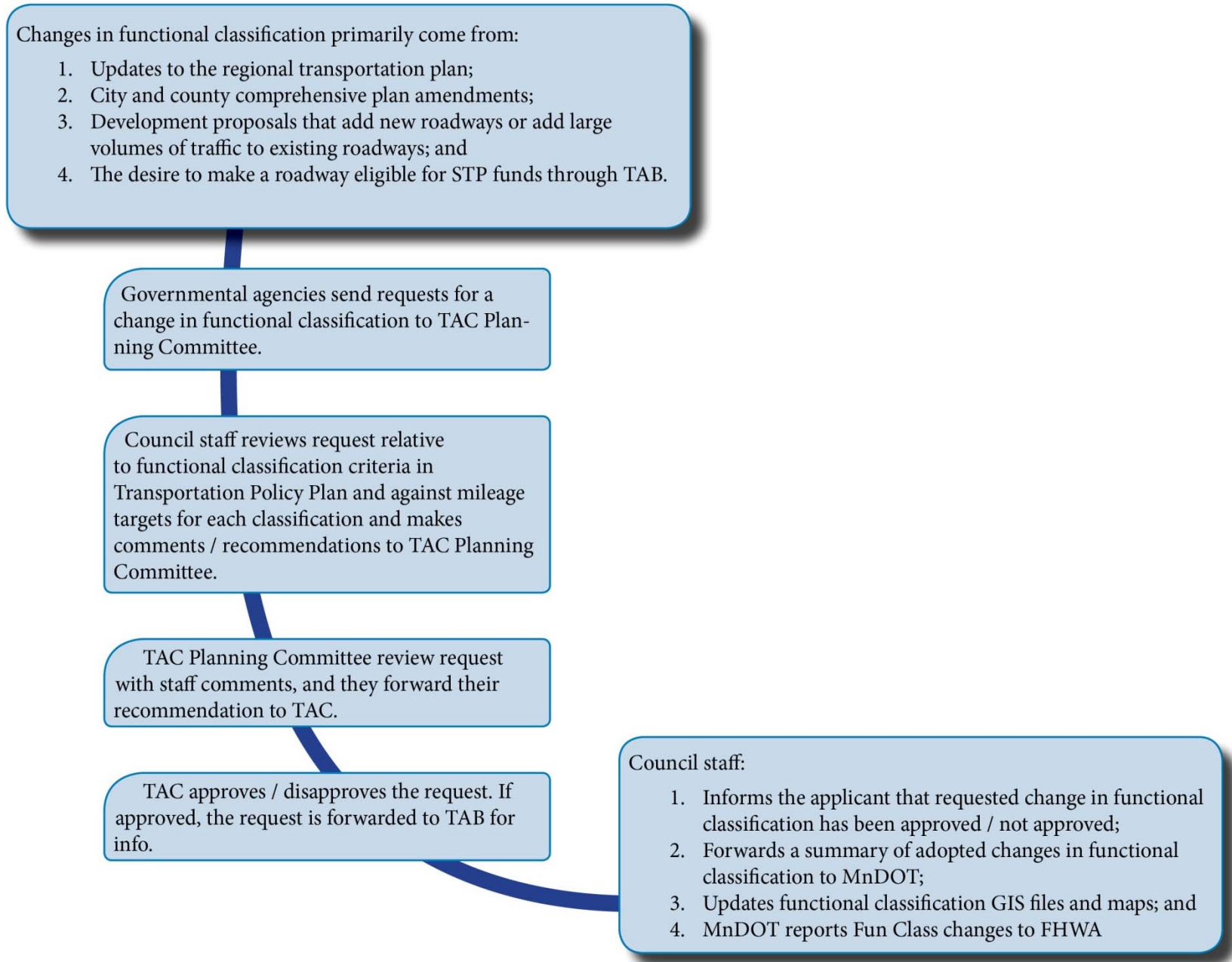
See more about **Travel Forecasting and the TBI**:  
[Need Link](#)



**Figure 9 – Air Quality Conformity Determination**



**Figure 10 – Functional Classification Process for Minor Arterials and Collectors**



### *Public Participation Process*

The Council's transportation planning efforts include a proactive public involvement process and comply with federal public participation plan requirements. The PPP can be found as an appendix to the Council's TPP.

#### See more about the Public Participation Plan:

[http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/TPP/2010/Oct21/Appendix/C\\_PPP.pdf](http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/TPP/2010/Oct21/Appendix/C_PPP.pdf)

A number of state requirements and procedures also support transportation planning activities:

#### **State requirements include:**

- The Controlled Access Approval Process;
- The Land Planning Act
- The Right of Way Acquisition Loan Fund Program (RALF)

### *Controlled Access Approval*

Minnesota state law (Mn. 473.166) requires the Council to approve any

controlled access highway or transit fixed-guideway projects in the metropolitan area before construction or right-of-way acquisition begins. Requests for approval come from the constructing agency—typically MnDOT.

Under this statute, the Council approval of a fixed guideway occurs at the time it adopts a locally preferred transit guideway alternative.

### *The Land Planning Act*

The Metropolitan Land Planning Act requires local governments to update their comprehensive plans every ten years. It also mandates the Council to create a Metropolitan Development Framework and specific plans for managing the region's transportation, aviation, water resources, and regional parks and open space systems.

The Land Planning Act requires the Council to review local comprehensive plans to ensure that they conform to these regional system plans. The Council's review is designed to determine how a

community's planned actions relate to the interests of the whole region over the long term. It helps ensure that costly public infrastructure, like roads and sewers, are built in an economical and timely fashion, so that public resources are used wisely.

Once a city adopts its plan and the Council finds the plan in conformance with regional plans, a city may change, or amend, a portion of its plan at any time. The Council must also review these comprehensive plan amendments.

#### See more about the Metropolitan Land Planning Act:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=473.859>

### *Right-of-Way Acquisition Loan Fund Program (RALF)*

State law allows the Council to levy a regional property tax for advance acquisition of highway rights of way threatened by imminent development. The funds are used by the Council to make loans to counties, cities and towns, which in turn buy property within the

officially mapped right of way of state trunk highways or metropolitan highways. The loans are repaid before highway construction takes place.

See more about the [Right-of-Way Acquisition Loan Fund Program](http://www.metrocouncil.org/services/ralf.htm).  
<http://www.metrocouncil.org/services/ralf.htm>

### Transit plans and studies include:

In addition to the federal metropolitan planning requirements, a number of transit studies are prepared from time to time:

- The Regional Service Improvement Plan for Transit
- Transit Alternative Analyses
- The Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Coordination Action Plan.
- Transitway Guidelines

### *Regional Service Improvement Plan (RSIP) for Transit*

The Regional Service Improvement Plan (RSIP) is called for by strategy 14c of the 2030 TPP. The RSIP is prepared by the Council as the

region's major public transit operator. The RSIP identifies all regional opportunities to increase transit service to maintain service quality on existing routes and to expand frequency, span and coverage to develop new transit markets. The RSIP guides allocation of the Regionally Allocated Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) for transit expansion and is used as input into the Regional Travel Demand Forecast Model.

### *Transit Alternative Analysis (AA)*

An AA is a study of a corridor or travel shed to determine viable transit alternatives and is required in order to receive federal New Starts funding for project construction. These studies examine potential alignments and modes, including both bus and rail options. Land use and zoning needs are also evaluated. In the Twin Cities region, these studies are typically prepared by a regional railroad authority.

### *Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Coordination Action Plan*

The 2005 requirements of the reauthorized federal transportation act required the creation of coordinated action plans for public transit and human services transportation at the state, regional and local levels. These plans establish goals, criteria and strategies for delivering efficient, coordinated services to elderly, underemployed or otherwise financially disadvantaged persons and persons with disabilities.

See more about the [Coordinated Action Plan](#):  
[NEED LINK](#)

### *Transitway Guidelines*

The Metropolitan Council created and adopted Regional Transitway Guidelines in cooperation with its partner transitway planning and development agencies in the region. The Transitway Guidelines are technical guidelines based in best practice for the development of corridors where intensive transit

investment is planned, as identified in the TPP. The Guidelines provide consistent practices for project partners to use in developing, operating, and maintaining commuter rail, light rail, and bus rapid transit.

See the [Transitway Guidelines](#):  
NEED LINK

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