

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

Metropolitan Council Building, 390 Robert Street No., Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101

TAB PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes: September 9, 2010
Metropolitan Council Chambers.

Members Present: Bill Hargis, Co-Chair, Jim Hovland, Co-Chair, Tony Bennett, Jan Callison, Dennis Hegberg, Robert Lilligren, Scott McBride, Richard Mussell, Jill Smith, Dick Swanson, David Thornton.

Guests and Staff: Tim Mayasich, TAC Chair, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority. Karl Keel, TAC Funding and Programming Committee Chair, Bloomington. Adam Harrington, Metro Transit. Kevin Roggenbuck, TAB Coordinator.

I. Call to order.

Co-Chair Hovland called the meeting to order at 12:35 PM.

II. Adoption of the Agenda.

Mr. Hovland asked for a motion to amend the agenda to include approval of the July 21 TAB Programming Committee minutes and to include an information item from Metro Transit following action on 2010-56. Mr. Lilligren moved, seconded by Ms. Callison, to amend and adopt the agenda. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

III. Approval of the Programming Committee minutes from July 21, 2010 and August 12, 2010.

Mr. Hargis moved, seconded by Mr. Lilligren, to approve the minutes from the July 21, 2010 TAB Programming Committee meeting. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote. Ms. Callison moved, seconded by Mr. McBride, to approve the minutes from the August 12, 2010 TAB Programming Committee meeting. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

IV. Information Items and Action Transmittals.

2010-55: 2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment, MN/DOT.

Mr. Mayasich presented this item to the committee. Mr. Mayasich described the project to be amended into the TIP and explained the reason for the amendment request.

Mr. McBride moved, seconded by Mr. Swanson, to recommend adoption of the TIP amendment as described in action transmittal 2010-55. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

2010-56: 2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment, MN/DOT.

Mr. Mayasich presented this item to the committee. Mr. Mayasich described the three projects to be amended into the TIP and explained the reason for the amendment request. These rail crossings are on the current Amtrak Empire Builder route and one of the possible high-speed rail routes between Chicago and the Twin Cities.

Mr. McBride moved, seconded by Mr. Swanson, to recommend adoption of the TIP amendment as described in action transmittal 2010-55. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Information: Request program year change for SP# TRS-TCMT-10B, purchase six articulated buses.

Adam Harrington, Metro Transit, informed the committee that Metro Transit would like to move a CMAQ project from TIP program year 2011 to 2014. Mr. Harrington explained that the purchase of six articulated buses was intended to serve a market that has since been affected by the recession. The project has a sunset date of March 31, 2011 and Metro Transit could advance other projects in the TIP to replace the bus purchase.

The committee discussed the request. Mr. Lilligren moved, seconded by Ms. Smith, to refer the request to the TAC Funding and Programming Committee, and the committee's discussion should include the potential impact on regional fleet and transit providers other than Metro Transit. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Discussion: 2011 Regional Solicitation Policy Issues.

Mr. Keel provided the committee with an update on the discussion of the eight policy issues affecting the 2011 regional solicitation from the August TAC Funding and Programming Committee. Mr. Keel said the committee will continue discussion of these issues at their September meeting and bring forward action items to the TAB.

Elevating preservation as a goal.

Mr. Keel said the committee favors including preservation criteria in the regional solicitation and suggested including it in the "A" Minor Arterial Augmenter category as a test or pilot program. Mr. Keel said the committee felt it was appropriate to include preservation in the Augmenter category because these minor arterials are in the most developed part of the region, many are in need of reconstruction and opportunities to add capacity are limited.

The committee discussed the purpose of the "A" Minor Arterial system and the potential difference in system needs between the urban and suburban environments. Mr. Lilligren said the region should discuss the appropriate balance of preservation and expansion for the whole "A" Minor Arterial system. Mr. Hargis suggested that the TAB should look at how transportation funds are allocated for all of the region's roadways. The committee agreed and felt this was a long-term issue.

Improving cost estimating.

Mr. Keel said the F&PC is working on a way to standardize and hopefully simplify projects cost estimating. There have been cases where project costs have increased significantly after beginning preliminary engineering. This means the selected project would have scored lower in the cost effectiveness criteria and may not have been awarded funds.

The committee suggested the F&PC look for best practices from other agencies and discussed whether it was beneficial for applicant agencies to spend more money up front in their application

Non-freeway Principal Arterials and consistency with the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan

Mr. Keel said the F&PC is looking for a better connection between the regional solicitation and the new direction for the metropolitan highway system t in the new Transportation policy Plan (TPP). The issue is difficult because there needs to be a balance between fitting Principal Arterial needs in a built environment with the new TPP policy.

The committee noted that constructing interchanges to replace intersections can significantly improve safety.

Integration of modes

Mr. Keel said the F&PC is considering a new qualifying criterion that every highway project must consider other modes in the design submitted in the regional solicitation and simplify the prioritizing criterion that evaluates the other modes included in the project.

The committee felt integration of modes was important, but cautioned that it could be a disincentive for applicants to submit highway projects if they will be required to include all modes in the design.

CMAQ system management

Mr. Keel explained that the F&PC is supportive of making traffic signal retiming projects more competitive in the regional solicitation. Signal retiming projects can have significant benefits in reducing congestion and automobile emissions, but they are too small to meet the \$500,000 minimum cost qualifying criterion or too costly to prepare for submission in the regional solicitation. The F&PC has discussed a set-aside amount for signal retiming projects within the CMAQ program.

The committee discussed the types of projects that could be funded through this approach. Mr. Keel said the F&PC will find out if the projects can be “bundled” and processed trough MN/DOT Metro State Aid as a group with one sponsor rather than by the individual project proposers.

Preservation: Use a portion of CMAQ funds for transit maintenance and preservation.

Mr. Keel explained that the Metropolitan Council has proposed that \$5.0 million be transferred annually from the CMAQ program to another program that would be used for the purchase of replacement transit buses. The Council feels that preservation of the transit system is a high priority and this funding would be used to replace buses that were purchased with CMAQ funding years ago

The committee expressed concern that this transfer would become an on-going funding for operations assistance and that this is a permanent policy change directed at solving what could be a short term problem. The committee also expressed concern how this policy change might affect opt out transit providers.

Expansion Priorities: Align CMAQ transit grants with the region's transit expansion priorities.

Mr. Keel said the Metropolitan Council has proposed to develop a Regional Service Improvement Plan that would prioritize future transit expansion needs in the region, and that plan should become an important part of the CMAQ transit expansion criteria.

The committee commented that the TAB should have a role in developing this ne service plan. Mr. Thornton said new air quality conformity standards will be issued soon and could affect the CMAQ program priorities.

Timing: Consider implementing a shorter, more flexible solicitation process.

Mr. Keel said the Metropolitan Council proposed that the CMAQ portion of the regional solicitation be done on a two-year timeframe rather than a four or five year timeframe because the transit market is unpredictable. Doing so means the TAB would not solicit for CMAQ transit expansion projects in 2011.

The committee commented that the TAB should reward good, long-range planning and that the current transit market conditions might be temporary. The committee also commented that transit facilities typically take more than two years to develop.

V. Other Business.

Committee members did not raise any other business..

VI. Adjourn

Mr. Hovland adjourned the Programming Committee meeting at 1:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted:
Kevin Roggenbuck,
TAB Coordinator.