

Transportation Committee

Business Item

Item: 2008-236

Meeting date: August 25, 2008

Council meeting September 10, 2008

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date:	August 21, 2008
Subject:	Adoption of Draft 2030 Transportation Policy Plan for Purposes of a Public Hearing
District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Regional Transportation Policy Plan
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Arlene McCarthy, Director MTS (651-602-1754) Amy Vennewitz, Deputy Dir. Finance & Planning (651-602-1058)
Division/Department:	Metropolitan Transportation Services

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the Draft 2030 Transportation Policy Plan incorporating recommended modifications (attached) for purposes of a public hearing on October 22, 2008, with continued acceptance of public comments until 5 pm, November 10, 2008.

Background

The Council as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization is required by both State and Federal law to prepare and update a long-range transportation plan for the region every four years. The current Transportation Policy Plan was adopted in December of 2004 and therefore a new version must be adopted by the Council during 2008. The proposed plan meets the federal and state requirements and supports the Council's adopted Regional Development Framework.

Federal law requires the Council to prepare a plan in conformance with federal transportation and air quality requirements. The plan must follow federal guidance and has been drafted to address the federal requirements. A review by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has indicated that the plan meets air quality conformance requirements.

During July and August, the preliminary draft plan was reviewed by the Council's Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) and its policy committee along with review by the TAB's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and its planning committee. The Metropolitan Council reviewed the preliminary draft plan at its August 13th, 2008 meeting and completed its review at the Committee of the Whole meeting on August 20th. A summary of the comments from Council members and the TAB and TAC along with the proposed response by staff are shown on the attached page. Staff will incorporate the recommended modifications and edits into the preliminary draft plan generating the Draft 2030 TPP document that will be submitted to the Council. On September 10th that Draft 2030 TPP document will be considered for approval by the Council.

Rationale

The adoption of the Draft 2030 Transportation Policy Plan will allow the plan to move forward for public review and comment as required by law. Staff can then compile and address the comments received and produce a final 2030 Transportation Policy Plan for adoption by the Council in December.

Funding

None required.

Known Support / Opposition

No known opposition. Support has been indicated by the TAB and TAC.

Comments Received on Preliminary Draft TPP

Comments Received	Proposed Response
1. Add a paragraph in Chapter 3 (Finance) on target funding, and check for consistency with a similar section of Chapter 6 (Highways)	A paragraph will be added to address this comment.
2. Check reference to new TH 41 in the plan, including any impacts on the environmental documentation in progress. Also address a new Mississippi River crossing between Hennepin and Anoka counties and associated right-of-way acquisition for each project.	Both the TH 41 river bridge and the Hennepin/Anoka county new river crossing will be shown on maps as major projects in the previous plan that are now on hold for re-scoping.
3. Add a sentence to Chapter 5 (Regional Mobility) clarifying that implementation of the congestion management plan will be the region's federally required congestion management process.	A clarifying sentence will be added.
4. The plan should specify that improvements identified in the congestion management phase 1 plan are not commitments to specific low-cost high-benefit treatments (Table 6-9), but are locations that may benefit from some type of low-cost high-benefit project.	Table 6-9 will note that these projects are representative and are not commitments to the specific work.
5. Safety is a focus of new planning efforts, but the plan does not adequately address safety in policies and plan elements.	A number of references will be added to the plan recognizing the need for safety improvements but also that preservation projects to a large degree include safety improvements that are the highest investment priority for the region.
6. Show the status of the TH 169 & I-494 interchange as a major expansion project to be re-scoped.	The 169/I-494 project will be included on the map showing expansion projects in the previous plan now on hold.

Comments Received on Preliminary Draft TPP

Comments Received	Proposed Response
7. On maps showing bus-only shoulders, show I-94 between TH 280 and 5th Street (Minneapolis) as an existing bus-only shoulder and not as a planned addition.	The bus only shoulder map will show the I-94 shoulder lanes between TH 280 and 5 th Street as existing bus only shoulders.
8. Clarify the status of Lakeville on maps showing the Transit Taxing District.	The Transit Taxing District map will be re-titled to be “Transit Capital Levy Communities” and Lakeville will be included with a footnote that this is effective 1/01/09.
9. Concern was expressed that under the new direction for investment, there is a potential conflict with local road authorities trying to solve congestion problems and accommodating forecasted traffic growth.	The plan must be clear that the investment direction in the plan is applicable to the Principal Arterial system. Local communities will not be prevented from solving congestion problems on the local roadway system.
10. Concern was expressed about how implementation of Strategy 7F could affect fuel availability for freight movement and other uses. Strategy 7F states: In times of limited resources and fuel shortages, the Council will advocate that transit be given high priority for available fuel.	Staff would like feedback from the Transportation Committee regarding retaining or deleting this strategy.
11. The Plan should have a vision of how the transportation system maintains the metro region’s national and global connectivity and competitiveness. The vision should include high-speed passenger and freight rail service to other cities, e.g. Chicago, within the Red Rock Transitway.	A new policy on regional, national and global connections and competitiveness along with modal strategies will be added to the Policies and Strategies and referenced in the modal chapters.

Comments Received on Preliminary Draft TPP

Comments Received	Proposed Response
12. The Plan should include Tax Increment Financing as a means available to multiple units of government to finance transitway station development and surrounding development that supports the transitway and transit use.	A reference to Tax Increment Financing will be added to the land-use chapter.
13. Expected population growth will contribute to increased transit ridership. The Metropolitan Council should consider expressing future transit ridership in terms, e.g. percent mode share, rather than simply a projected number of rides.	The plan acknowledges that increased ridership will be accomplished through both population growth and increased mode share. Mode share statistics are available only every 10 years as part of the Travel Behavior Inventory done in conjunction with the census.
14. The region needs to build projects and implement programs that reduce congestion, even though it might be a small reduction. For that reason, the TAB suggests consider using the term “congestion management” with “congestion reduction”, acknowledging that completely eliminating congestion is not the goal of the Plan.	Congestion management is the term commonly used by the federal highway administration and MnDOT. The plan focuses on low cost-high benefit projects that will offer spot congestion reduction but not result in system-wide congestion reduction. The plan emphasis is on congestion management and offering alternatives to congestion.
15. The Plan should include preservation of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers for freight movement. The Plan should identify the amount and value of commodities moved by river barge.	Waterways are currently included in the Freight chapter existing system description and preservation of the existing system is the highest priority of the plan. In addition a chart on commodity movement by mode is included.
16. There was a general comment that the Plan focuses improvements on existing the traffic and transit problems with little emphasis on foreseeing future investment needs.	Given limited resources and existing needs that can’t all be addressed currently it is difficult to focus on potentially needed future investments.

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Comments Received	Proposed Response
17. The Plan should include a strategy to extend transitways outside the seven-county region.	The transitway map whose lines end with arrows recognizes potential connections outside of the region. The bus improvement section also speaks to the need for long distance express bus service outside of the region.
Metropolitan Council Comments	
1. The Finance chapter should emphasize the risk in the assumption that MVST will grow at a rate to maintain the existing system.	References to the risk associated with assuming growth in MVST revenues will cover maintaining the transit will be added in the Finance chapter..
2. The document should include an Executive Summary.	An Executive Summary stand-alone document will be prepared.
3. The document should include information that answers frequently asked basic questions about transportation such as how transportation is financed.	Staff will seek to address these frequently asked questions through additional information available on the web-site and printable materials. The Plan may also include links to these materials.
4. The document seems to have a bias towards transit in that it calls for additional funding for transit expansion but not for highway expansion.	The plan will clarify that some highway expansion is funded through the bridge improvements and congestion management projects. In addition, language will be added emphasizing that the System Optimization Strategy will develop a vision for the future improvement and expansion of the metropolitan trunk highway system that will require additional revenues to implement.
5. The Non-motorized chapter should include language that the Council encourages and will fund programs aimed as educating bicyclists on the rules of the road.	Language will be added that speaks to the education of bicyclists on following appropriate driving laws.
6. Highway numbers should be added to the maps to allow for location identification.	Highway identification numbers will be added to maps.

Comments Received on Preliminary Draft TPP

Comments Received	Proposed Response
<p>7. A suggestion was made that the Transitway map be divided into the separate categories of transitways and shown on individual maps.</p>	<p>The plan currently has the proposed Express Bus with Transit Advantages and Arterial BRT Transitways shown on separate maps. In addition, corridor names will be added to the combined transitways map.</p>
<p>8. A question was raised regarding whether the Council should take a position on the future of the Crystal airport.</p>	<p>MAC has just completed the 3 of the long-range reliever airport plans, including the plan for the Crystal airport. These plans will be before the Council for review and comment this fall and any comments can be approved at that time.</p>