

Transportation Advisory Board

of the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities

TO: Transportation Advisory Board
FROM: Kevin Roggenbuck, Transportation Coordinator
DATE: June 8, 2011
RE: TAB Programming Committee item IV.g.: Contingency Planning for a New Federal Transportation Funding Act.

The current extension of SAFETEA-LU will expire on September 30. All the projects in the draft 2012-2015 TIP and all the projects submitted in the 2011 regional solicitation are intended to be funded through the next federal transportation Act. The TAB Executive Committee directed the TAB Programming Committee to conduct contingency planning in an effort to be prepared for how the next Act might impact the TIP and regional solicitation.

At the May 18 TAB meeting, staff reviewed information from Rep. John Mica's webpage describing his priorities for reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU. Rep. Mica is the Chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee. Staff also described the Obama Administration's proposal for reauthorization from an article published in the AASHTO Journal. Staff noted the similarities and differences in the information available to date.

Similarities:

- Consolidation of surface transportation programs into fewer core programs that are more focused on the national interest. The Administration and House T&I may have different ideas on consolidation.
- Streamlined or accelerated project delivery.
- Desire for a long-term funding Act covering 6 years.

Differences:

- Administration wants to increase funding while the House T&I Chair proposes 'doing more with less'.

Potential Differences/Unknowns:

- House T&I Chair favors innovative financing methods including private sector expertise and capital.
- Administration proposes to create a national high speed rail, national infrastructure bank and Transportation Leadership Program, likely opposed by the House T&I Chair.

Given this information, staff offers three generalized potential scenarios in a new federal Act:

1. Consolidation of surface transportation programs creating greater flexibility or competition to fund projects not typically part of the regional solicitation; funding available to the TAB is about the same compared to SAFETEA-LU.
2. Consolidation of surface transportation programs creating greater flexibility or competition to fund projects not typically part of the regional solicitation; funding available to the TAB is considerably less (30%) compared to SAFETEA-LU.
3. Consolidation of surface transportation programs with new rules making some projects already programmed by the TAB and submitted in the 2011 regional solicitation ineligible; funding available to the TAB is considerably less (30%) compared to SAFETEA-LU.

These three scenarios lead to several questions:

- If the regional solicitation funding programs are combined with others, how does the TAB and other regional partners decide how to allocate funding in the 2011 regional solicitation?
- If funding available to the TAB is significantly reduced, should projects already programmed in the TIP and STIP have priority over those submitted in the 2011 regional solicitation?
- If funding available to the TAB is significantly reduced, should the TAB consider suspending the 2011 regional solicitation funding awards?