



# Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership Meeting

July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023 @ 10:00 am  
Hybrid Meeting Format  
(MnDOT Office/MS Teams)55792 MS Teams

## SUMMARY

Members in attendance: Bryan Anderson, Taylour Blakeman , Ron Chicka, Sandra Davey, Jason DiPiazza, Kate Ferguson, Jim Foldesi, Krysten Foster, Rick Goutermont, Stephen Hallan, Robert Hass, Duane Hill, Jason Holliday, Andy Hubley, Mark LeBrun, JinYeene Neumann, Trent Nicholson, Gary Peterson, Ricky Roche, Penny Simonsen, Cindy Voigt, John Welle

Guests in attendance: Clayton Beck, Jenny Bourbonais, Sarah Ciochetto, Paige Holte, Jason Fisher, James Gittemeier, Jim Johnson, Scott Johnson, Jeff Madill, Pat McGraw, Prescott Morrill, Gary Nelson, Brandon Nurmi, Anna Pierce, Michelle Pierson, Brian Shekleton, Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver

### 1. Call to Order – Attendance

Clayton Beck welcomed attendees joining the meeting in person and on MS Teams and reviewed procedures, voting, and online participation protocol. Michelle Pierson reviewed attendance procedures. Chair DiPiazza called the meeting to order at 10:04am.

### 2. Approval of Meeting Summary- April 12, 2023

**A motion to approve the meeting summary sent out as Attachment #1 was made by Mark LeBrun/Jim Foldesi. Motion carried.**

### 3. Comments from Citizens Present

No comments provided.

### 4. Presentation: Carbon Reduction Program (Anna Pierce, MnDOT)

Anna Pierce reviewed the Carbon Reduction Strategy, program timelines, and guiding documents. The engagement portion is currently underway, and a survey is open through July 14<sup>th</sup>. The link to the survey was emailed to the NEMNATP mailing list following the meeting, in addition to the slides presented by Pierce. The engagement will guide the Carbon Reduction Strategy that is due by November 15, 2023. Questions included how this strategy will guide funding distributions. That has not yet been decided. Pierce will coordinate with Clayton Beck to send results of survey and draft language to ATPs in September for review, and will look to connect with the NEMNATP at the October meeting to gather

collective feedback regarding project selection criteria. Another question was asked about transportation demand and if that would be included. Pierce noted that they would. Find the CRS website at: <https://talk.dot.state.mn.us/carbon-reduction-strategy> .

## 5. Presentation: PROTECT (Brian Shekleton, MnDOT)

Brian Shekleton joined the meeting and presented a series of slides showcasing the PROTECT (Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation) formula process. He reiterated that this program was designed to ensure that surface transportation projects on the federal system are resilient. With a quick turnaround, it is advised for FY 24 and FY 25 to look at the current STIP to evaluate projects that may benefit from additional funds to ensure resiliency from climate related changes and natural disaster events due to increased variability. Minnesota is seeing warmer and wetter, more damaging weather. He reviewed program goals, project eligibility, and how developing a Resiliency Improvement Plan will help guide projects in FY 26 and beyond. The Resiliency Improvement Plan will be developed by February 2024, and will involve an analysis on all roadways in the federal aid system, including the CSAH systems. Several NEMNATP members asked questions about how projects will be selected or how new projects could be added to the STIP. It was noted that county highway maintenance departments regularly attend to projects that could be eligible, and that county and city engineering and maintenance crews have a lot of knowledge about the systems in their jurisdictions. A conversation about guideline, and about who is conducting the analysis and identifying the vulnerabilities. Constraints with timelines for FY24 and FY25 were discussed. County engineers expressed interest in reviewing the final product before it is finalized and published. Shekleton expressed interest in presenting to the NEMNATP at the October meeting with updates about this process. He invited engineers and NEMNATP members to email him with pertinent data and questions. He can be reached at [brian.shekleton@state.mn.us](mailto:brian.shekleton@state.mn.us) A copy of the slide deck as presented will be emailed to the NEMNATP mailing list following the meeting.

## 6. PROTECT Subcommittee Report (Jason DiPiazza) (Attachment #2)

Jason DiPiazza directed meeting attendees to consult Attachment number two, and reported on the convening of the NEMNATP's PROTECT Subcommittee. The subcommittee was tasked with evaluating the current STIP and identify projects for eligibility and selecting projects for FY 24 that would align with the program and benefit from additional resiliency. There is \$800,000 in this funding source for each FY24 and FY25. The subcommittee offered the following recommendations:

- Recommends adding \$285,000 in FY24 PROTECT funds for SP 171-222-008, for storm sewer improvements in the City of Virginia on 13<sup>th</sup> Street South from 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue West to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue West. This is already a federal project.

- Recommends \$515,000 of FY24 PROTECT funds for SP 069-625-021 pending approval of St. Louis County's functional classification update.

It was also noted that:

- Cook County seeks more flexibility on SP 016-612-076 which includes the replacement of Bridge #95684 over the Little Devil Track River. Pending further coordination with MnDOT's office of Sustainability and Public Health, PROTECT funds towards this project could be programmed for FY25. The county could advance construct (AC) these funds if the project stays on track for a FY24 delivery.

- St. Louis co and MnDOT's Office of Sustainability and Public Health will coordinate their project details

before the October 2023 meeting of the NEMNATP.

-The NEMNATP PROTECT subcommittee will continue to work on FY 25 and bring recommendations before the ATP at the October meeting.

-The NEMNATP will reconvene in early 2024 to make recommendations for long-term investments (FY2026 and beyond)

**A motion to recommend SP 171-222-008 and SP 069-625-021 receive additional funds from the PROTECT formula funding was made by JinYeene Neumann/Duane Hill. Motion carries.**

#### 7. Transportation Alternatives Program Review and Discussion (Andy Hubley) (Attachment #3)

Andy Hubley directed attendees to Attachment # 3 and reviewed the Transportation Alternatives process, and membership. In reviewing the membership Hubley noted that several members of the Task Force are up for renewal. He also thanked Bob Manzoline for many years of service to this Task Force. Bob Manzoline has requested to retire from this task force and suggested that Sarah Ciochetto be nominated to fill his role represented a voice for Paved Trails. Hubley also noted that Joel Astleford no longer works for Bois Forte and that ARDC would be looking for recommendations for nominations for a Local Government #3 representative for the October meeting. It was also noted that the District State Aid Engineer serves on this task force as an ex-officio (non-voting member) JinYeene Neumann requested that an engineer outside of the MPO region be added to this Task Force. Krysten Foster nominated JinYeene Neumann, Carlton County Highway Engineer to serve as a rural engineer on the Task Force. Neumann accepted the nomination should a motion pass. Hubley also noted that ARDC will work to ensure when municipalities under 5000 people apply for a TA grant that the County will be notified to ensure proper steps are taken for County sponsorship.

**A motion to renew memberships of Bryan Anderson, Ellen Lynch, Andrea Orest, and Jim Sloan; to approve the nomination of Sarah Ciochetto to replace Bob Manzoline, to approve the nomination of JinYeene Neumann to serve as a new role as a rural engineer, and to approve inclusion of an official membership of an ex-officio role for the District State Aid Highway Engineer was made by Krysten Foster/Jim Foldesi. The motion carried.**

#### 8. Mesabi Trail Plan Update (Sarah Ciochetto, RRA)

Sarah Ciochetto, representing the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Rail Authority and the Mesabi Trail provided updates on trail progress and projects. Ciochetto note that there are some improvement and minor project updates at the Bruce Mine Trailhead with interpretation, minor improvements with pavement markings, signs in the County Rd. 88 to Ely, and have seen bikers using the Ely to Tower segment. Tower to Sudan reconstruction project will be kicking off soon, which includes a bridge over a trout stream. Two sections remain unconstructed: McKinley to Biwabik, which may get bid out at the end of the summer, and the Y Store to the West Two River. Hoping to also get this project bid, leaving only one segment (2.5 miles into Tower) that would be left incomplete. Some other segments are looking at reconstruction (Buhl to Kinney, Eveleth to Gilbert, and the trail in Ely). Seeking bonding funds for a segment from Aurora to Hoyt Lakes which received TA funds. Big one is Virginia to Mt. Iron, CSAH 102 is slated to be closed, will require a bridge over Hwy 53 and the train tracks. In the pre-planning stage for now.

#### 9. ARDC 2024 work plan (Andy Hubley) (Attachment #4)

Andy Hubley noted that identified priorities for this year include community transportation plans in the cities of Aitkin and Carlton, using the data-bike to assess trail pavement condition, assist with active transportation development near McGregor, assist the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association, the North Shore Scenic Drive council, and manage the MnDOT trail counter program. ARDC is also being asked to work with MnDOT to develop a scope of looking at an emergency road system to serve the North Shore.

Duane Hill added

some context to the emergency road system evacuation plan. It was noted we do not need to do planning, but simply identify a scope as it may be a good application for a PROTECT planning grant. Comments from members noted that a ferry may be more practical than building additional roadways through rock and river. Bryan Anderson noted there may be cost savings if an application to this discretionary grant program is submitted after the state plan has been developed. Developing the scope may assist with identifying funding sources for such a planning effort.

Other activities as identified include support SRTS in Aurora, Lake Vermilion Trail Mapping, D1 Bike Plan implementation, RTCC support, and Scenic Byway assistance.

Hubley also invited members to seek ARDC support if there are projects that should be considered for support. Commissioner Stephen Hallan noted that while Pine County is not in the ARDC region, but is in MnDOT D1. Hubley noted that Commissioner Hallan should reach out to Bob Voss at ECRDC if there are projects requiring support, and if it is advisable, ARDC can also participate and assist.

**A motion to approve the ARDC FY 2024 Work Plan was made by Rick Goutermont/Sarah Ciochetto. Motion carried.**

#### 10. MnDOT Updates (Bryan Anderson, MnDOT) (Attachment #5)

Draft Capital Highway Investment Plan(CHIP) is being developed. Updated each year, looks 10 years out, and details capital investments on the state highway network. It serves to double check against MnSHIP to set budgets and investment direction. The projects in the CHIP will feed into the TPP. Allows districts to coordinate with local and regional units of government on future investment. Some projects are identified closer to the construction year including TED, Freight, and Safety projects. Anderson showcased websites to review and offer public comment soon. These websites will be distributed with the slides to the ATP mailing list following the meeting. Anderson also reviewed upcoming Urban and community projects in the CHIP now slated for 2028 and 2029. He also reviewed projects for 2030, 2031, 2032, and 2033. Anderson also noted the Transportation Economic Development (TED) program has a solicitation currently open. Expressions of interest are due July 24, 2023. Website can be found in the slides emailed to NEMNATP mailing list, and Anderson noted that our District has done well with this funding source in the past and invites members to look to this funding source for projects. Anderson also gave updates regarding transportation funding sources included in the legislation passed in 2023 which included Safe Routes to School funding at \$10M/year statewide, and Active Transportation funding at \$19.5M/year. Solicitations for these funds will be upcoming. The legislature also asked MnDOT to set up an advisory committee. The solicitation is currently open. Anderson recommended that a NEMNATP member seek inclusion on this advisory committee to represent our region. He reviewed responsibilities and invited NEMNATP members to let him know if you would like to apply or to cc him on your application to serve on this committee.

#### 11. Local Program Updates (Krysten Saatela Foster, MnDOT) (Attachment #6)

Krysten Foster introduced Paige Holte to the membership. Paige Holte is in possession of the spreadsheet distributed as Attachment #6. Foster noted she is one meeting short of 10 years as serving

as a member on the NEMNATP. She reflected on her time with the ATP and noted that the organization of the NEMNATP has brought a level of fairness.

Duane Hill noted that today is Krysten Foster's last day at MnDOT. He thanked Foster for her work as the State Aid engineer for the last 3 years, and for her unique perspective.

## 12. Member Concerns/Future Agenda Topics

Duane Hill shared the following updates:

-We have a new TZD Coordinator. Rahya Giesler, who worked for MADD for many years, and recently worked for the Department of Public Safety to install school bus stop arm cameras. She has a great traffic safety background, and is very connected in this circle. Workplan and priorities are being identified, and there is hope to recommit to parent education component to Driver's Education.

-Transportation Round Table with state legislatures at the Duluth Depot from 10:00-noon on 7/17/23.

-\$200Million in State Bonding for the Blatnik, Wisconsin budgeted \$400M, which should help leverage federal funding support.

Jason DiPiazza noted that it came up in our agenda setting meeting that it would be welcome to have someone from the MnDOT state office review legislative updates.

Mark LeBrun offered thanks to MnDOT and State Aid for all their work to review new federal funding sources.

Cindy Voigt also thanked MnDOT and MIC staff for their support in changing scope of the City of Duluth's federal project.

Andy Hubley will do formal introductions to new members that have replaced some folks who retired at a future meeting. Our guidelines call for a membership review at the beginning of each calendar year.

Jason DiPiazza presented Krysten Foster a certificate in thanks for near 10 years of support in our region. She will be missed, and he noted that she ties us all together. Thanks and best of luck to Krysten.

## 13. Adjourn

**A motion to adjourn was brought by JinYeene Neumann/Cindy Voigt at 12:03pm. Motion carried.**

**Bold print denotes membership action.**

Next Meeting: October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Hybrid or at Carlton Transportation Building