



Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership Meeting

October 11, 2023 @ 10:00 am*
MS Teams/Carlton Transportation Building

SUMMARY

Members in attendance: Bryan Anderson, Taylour Blakeman, Chris Beldon, Sarah Ciochetto, Jason DiPiazza, Kate Ferguson, Jim Foldesi, Karin Grandia, Robert Hass, Stephen Hallan, Miles Hansen, Stacey Hawkins, Jason Hollinday, Andy Hubley, Michael Kearney, Mark LeBrun, Gary Nelson, JinYeene Neumann, Trent Nicholson, Brandon Nurmi, Gary Peterson, Ricky Roche, Whitney Ridlon, Penny Simonsen, Cindy Voigt, John Welle, Debra White

Guests in attendance: Clayton Beck, Jason Fisher, Paige Holte, Jim Johnson, Scott Johnson, Jeff Madiill Charlie Moore, Prescott Morrill, Anna Pierce, Michelle Pierson, Brian Shekleton, Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, Nissa Tupper

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 10:06am. He also noted that directly following the NEMNATP meeting that MnDOT would hold a Mn/SHIP public hearing and that an email with a link to that public hearing presentation and open comment forum would be emailed to all NEMNATP members and he noted that people attending in person would be welcome to stay for the hearing.

2. Committee Business

Chair DiPiazza informed participants that there were four items that required voting processes.

- Approval of the Meeting Summary – July 12, 2023 (Attachment #1)

A motion to approve the July 12, 2023 NEMNATP Meeting Summary was made by John Welle/Jim Foldesi. No discussion. Motion carried.

- Appointment of CY 2024 Strategic Planning Committee (Attachment #2)

A motion to approve the slate of CY2024 Strategic Planning Committee members, including a new nomination and acceptance of Brandon Nurmi representing Rural Transit, was made by Cindy Voigt/Gary Peterson. Discussion included a note of thanks to those on this committee and a reflection that this committee meets two weeks before ATP meetings, works to set the agenda, and meetings are held online. Motion carried.

- Approval of CY 2024 Meeting Schedule (Attachment #2)

A motion to approve the 2024 meeting dates for NEMNATP meetings to be held from 10am-noon on Wednesdays on February 14, April 10, July 10, and October 9, 2024 was made by Karin Grandia/Jim Foldesi. No discussion. Motion carried.

- Election of CY 2024 Vice Chair

Chair DiPiazza noted this is the final meeting he will preside over as Chair. He thanked ARDC staff and Vice-Chair Hass for their assistance. He reviewed the NEMNATP guideline that notes that a Vice-Chair will ascend to serve as Chair in the second year of their terms, and noted that Robert Hass will lead the partnership next year. He then noted that he would be seeking a nomination, and if accepted, a motion to approve a Vice-Chair for 2024, who would then serve as Chair in CY 2025. Clayton Beck displayed the history of Chair/Vice Chair representation.

A motion was made to nominate Trent Nicholson, Koochiching County Engineer, as Vice Chair by Jason DiPiazza/Robert Hass. Trent was asked if he would accept the nomination and he agreed. Motion carried.

A second motion to approve the nomination of Trent Nicholson to serve as Vice Chair was made by Jim Foldesi/Karin Grandia. No discussion. Motion carried. Trent Nicholson was thanked for his willingness to serve this partnership.

3. Comments from Citizens Present

No comments were brought forth.

4. Presentation: PROTECT

Brian Shekleton, MnDOT Principal Climate and Resilience Planner, provided updates about the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) program including new guidance. The four PROTECT funding priorities include: Resilience Improvements, Resilience Planning, At-Risk Coastal Infrastructure, and Community Resilience and Evacuation Routes. Shekleton reviewed eligible activities. He also went over some eligibility changes, which added all minor collectors in urban and rural areas, all local roads in urban and rural areas. It does not include minimum maintenance roads. He reviewed the Departments approach to investment and distribution of the funds, and noted that the approach is phased so that future projects align with the Resilience Improvement plan's priorities. Shekleton also provided updates about the Resilience Improvement Plan development, including providing examples of the screening tool showcasing vulnerability assessment. A copy of the slide deck presented by Shekleton

will be emailed to the NEMNATP mailing list.

Shekleton invited questions from the NEMNATP. Robert Hass asked if when the RIP analysis is complete, if it would include GIS data that could be shared with local transportation managers. Shekleton noted the contractor will be providing 11x17 pdf maps and GIS data.

5. Process discussion to select PROTECT PROJECTS

Jason DiPiazza noted that the biggest change was that the tool is only evaluating federally eligible roads, but now local roads may be eligible for PROTECT funds. There were questions about how to best add local projects to MnDOT's list of identified projects that were assembled from the tool that targets only the federally eligible roadways. Discussion included recognizing capacity to include all eligible projects in the plan, and what types of protocols may enable local projects to be eligible. It was noted that in ATP1, there are not significant funds tied to this funding source. It was acknowledged that seeking these funds also requires federalization of a project. Examples of packaging a series of projects and the use of one county as a fiscal agent were provided. Jim Foldesi mentioned it would be good for county level engineers to do a scan of their systems and develop lists of projects that would be a good fit for enhancing resiliency in their system on higher volume roadways.

Chair DiPiazza noted that ARDC would be convening the PROTECT subgroup next week, and Brian Shekleton asked to be included. This group may discuss a process to formalize a process to submit projects, perhaps top three projects per county.

6. Presentation: ARDC Project Updates

Clayton Beck, ARDC Associate Planner, provided updates on the Transportation Alternatives program process and timelines. He noted that the solicitation is currently open for entities seeking this funding source to submit Letters of Intent (LOI). The deadline to submit a LOI is November 3, 2023. MPOS and RDOs will review letters of intent and reach out to applicants with recommendations to proceed on Monday, November 20th. The Official start to the full application period begins Friday November 24, 2023, and full applications must be submitted by Friday, January 12, 2024. ARDC will convene the TA Task Force to review and score applications and will present recommendations at either the February or April 2024 meeting of the NEMNATP. Learn more here: <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/ta/>

Beck also presented a series of updates regarding ARDC's Regional Transportation Work Plan projects including providing updates regarding the Aitkin and Cloquet Area Transportation Planning processes, an update on the work being undertaken with the Mille Lacs Transportation Plan update, ARDC's assistance with Scenic Byway Organizations including Superior National Forest Scenic Byway, the North Shore Scenic Drive, and Avenue of Pines. Beck shared a link to a recent online story map ARDC has developed to showcase places of interest along the Superior National Forest Scenic Byway which can be found here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9a60ce3fa90b459587f9cf30e63e538e>

Beck also presented about ARDC's implementation of MnDOT's pedestrian/bicycle counting program and invited those gathered to reach out to Carson Polomis at ARDC if they have a trail or area that may benefit from showcasing bike/pedestrian impacts at cpolomis@ardc.org.

7. MnDOT Project Updates

Bryan Anderson, MnDOT D1, presented updates about the Transportation Economic Development (TED) Program and noted Aitkin County submitted a TED application for

TH210/TH 65 and CSAH 8 roundabout, a \$2.1M request. If the entire budget for the TED program is not distributed, a solicitation will go out in spring of 2024 for any remaining TED funds. As a biannual project, the next full solicitation will be in the spring of 2025. Jim Foldesi encouraged the NEMNATP membership to evaluate projects as there is good funding available for greater Minnesota.

Anderson also noted that several other funding solicitations are currently open including:

Greater Minnesota Stand-Alone Noise Barrier Program: Application due Dec 31st.
www.dot.state.mn.us/environment/noise/greater-mn-program.html

MN Safe Routes to School Infrastructure: Applications due Feb 2nd.
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes/infrastructure-grants.html>

Active Transportation Infrastructure Grants: Applications due Feb 2nd.
<https://www.dot.state.mn.us/active-transportation-program/infrastructure-grants.html>

Minnesota Rail Service Improvement Program Grant Program: Applications due Dec 15th. www.mndot.gov/ofrw/railroad/mrsi.html

Minnesota Highway Freight Program: Applications due Oct 13th.
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/ofrw/mhfp/>

Anderson also presented on ongoing and upcoming Corridor Studies.

8. **Presentation: Update on Draft Carbon Reduction Strategies & CRP Project Evaluation**

Anna Pierce, MnDOT, presented updates on the Carbon Reduction Strategy, the comment summary and changes, and the Carbon Reduction Toolkit. The Carbon Reduction strategy will support efforts to reduce transportation emissions and identify projects and strategies to reduce those emissions. The plan must be submitted to FHWA by November 15, 2023, and must be updated every 4 years. Pierce reviewed the components of the document. She then presented on the Carbon Reduction Toolkit development process. This toolkit is due November 22, 2023. It will include an informational memo, a copy of the CRP application, criteria, project evaluation criteria, and a project scoring template. It is anticipated that FY 2025, 2026 and 2027 targets will be released for CRP funds in December 2023. In January, the Department will send the drafted toolkit to ATPs, MPOs, and districts for feedback. The informational memo and compiled toolkit will be shared with MPOs by February 15, 2024. Solicitations for CRP funds will begin at ATPs, MPOs, and Districts in February and March 2024.

In terms of local impact, it looks like there will be \$5.71M available to fund rural projects in ATPs, \$7.32M for statewide projects, and \$7.870M for MPO funds. Districts will not be able to apply, but cities, counties, and tribes can apply for these funds. Anything in an MPO area will go through the MPO process. A question was posed about how the selection of projects would work. There will be a very narrow turn around time to submit, evaluate, and select projects. It was asked if the NEMNATP PROTECT subcommittee could be called upon to manage this process? Discussion was favorable.

A motion to utilize the NEMNATP PROTECT subcommittee to evaluate CRP projects

was made by Cindy Voigt/Jim Foldesi. No discussion. Motion carried.

9. Member Concerns/Future Agenda Topics

Cindy Voigt commended Chair Jason DiPiazza for his leadership and service to the NEMNATP the past two years.

Chair DiPiazza noted the February meeting of the NEMNATP would be held on Wednesday, February 14th, 2024 at MnDOT Offices in Duluth.

10. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 11:35am by JinYeene Neumann/Karin Grandia. Motion carried. Meeting attendees were invited to stay for the MN/SHIP Public Hearing directly following the meeting.

Bold print denotes action items.

The next meeting of the NEMNATP will be held at 10:00am on Wednesday, February 14, 2024 at MnDOT District 1 offices located at 1123 Mesaba Ave Duluth, MN 55811.