



Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership Meeting

February 14, 2024 @ 10:00 am*
MS Teams/Duluth MnDOT D1 Office

MEETING SUMMARY

Members in attendance:

Bryan Anderson, Taylour Blakeman, Sandra Davey, Chris Beldon, Ron Chicka, Sarah Ciochetto, Robert Deschampe, Jason DiPiazza, Kate Ferguson, Jim Foldesi, Karin Grandia, Robert Hass, Stephen Hallan, Jason Hollinday, Andy Hubley, Michael Kearney, Mark LeBrun, Gary Nelson, JinYeene Neumann, Trent Nicholson, Brandon Nurmi, Gary Peterson, Penny Simonsen, Cindy Voigt, John Welle, Debra White

Guests in Attendance:

Clayton Beck, Jason Fisher, Paige Holte, Jim Johnson, Jeff Madill, Pat McGraw, Mike Moilanen, Prescott Morrill, Tracy Olson, Anna Pierce, Michelle Pierson, Carson Polomis, Beverly Sidlo-Tolliver, Scott Johnson, Jason Fisher, Pat McGraw, Siri Simons, Nicole Westadt

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. Beck thanked Chair Hass for serving as Chair and guiding NEMNATP meetings for the 2024 calendar year. Chair Hass called the meeting to order at 10:04am.

2. Committee Business

Chair Hass invited those gathered to look over the meeting summary from October 11, 2023. Outside of one comment about confusing language about nominating the 2024 Vice Chair, there were no suggested changes.

A motion to approve the October 11, 2023 NEMNATP Meeting Summary was made by Jim Foldesi/John Well. No further discussion. Motion carried.

3. Comments from Citizens Present

No comments were brought forward.

4. Presentation: Corridors of Commerce Program (Nicole Westadt, MnDOT)

Westadt provided background and updates pertaining to the Corridors of Commerce (COC) Program that resulted from the 2023 session of the MN Legislature that included funding, requirements of allocation percentages and how funds may be awarded and authorized the Transportation Commissioner to allocate up to 10% of funding available in each fiscal year for Readiness Advancement Activities that may impact future COC candidates. Westadt also noted developments of a new “phased” project selection process. MnDOT will need to develop a scoring system for readiness advancement projects. There is a Readiness Advancement Advisory Group that Bryan Anderson is a part of for ATP-1. Westadt invited others from NEMNATP who may like to participate to connect via email at Nicole.westadt@state.mn.us. Slides from the presentation, and an email about the Readiness Advancement Advisory Group were emailed to ATP mailing lists following the ATP meeting.

5. Presentation: Carbon Reduction Program/toolkit (Siri Simons, MnDOT)

Siri Simons, along with Anna Pierce, provided updates regarding the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) and the release of the new toolkit. It was noted that the CRP was established under the IIJA bill, and will provide approximately \$20.9 million annually over 5 years to reduce carbon emissions from surface transportation. Simons reviewed Minnesota’s Carbon Reduction Strategy. Simons provided in depth updates about the CRP Toolkit and solicitation materials that have been developed. These items will help ATPs develop methodology for soliciting for CRP projects, will provide tools to both applicants and to those assembled to review and score applications. There are three categories of eligible projects that include: electrification; looking at enhancing travel options; and low carbon infrastructure and system management. ATPs and MPOs will be asked to determine solicitation processes, and convene a project review and scoring committee. Selection recommendations will need to be approved by the applicable boards (here: NEMNATP). If approved, projects will be added to the TIP (if applicable) and STIP. Simons and Pierce presented information about the evaluation criteria, and a template application. They also demonstrated the new Carbon Emissions Tool (CET), an excel spreadsheet-based tool to evaluate emissions reductions and cost-effectiveness. Simons and Pierce also provided information about how to prepare for a solicitation, and a possible 2-phase approach.

Questions were asked about whether some projects scored better than others, noting the 3 categories of eligible projects. Simons noted that in running sample projects, no one type scored higher than others. There were some recommendations about cost of projects and that infrastructure projects (including installation of an EV station) would need to fill out the toolkit. It was also noted that applicants should use caution to only list the eligible portions of projects for total cost estimates, as it could reflect a lower score if they use a whole project cost estimate, including other non-eligible costs. A question was asked as to who should receive the solicitation. It was noted that all government entities should be able to apply, and tribes as well. Non state aid cities would need support from the counties to apply. MnDOT

encourages ATPs to open up the solicitation to everyone to apply.
More information and the toolkit may be found here: <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/carbon-reduction-program/>

Anna Pierce invited any further questions be emailed to: Anna.m.pierce@state.mn.us.

Website resources links and the slides from this presentation were emailed to the NEMNATP mailing lists following the meeting.

6. Carbon Reduction Program Project Updates/ FY 2025 CRP Recommendations (Bryan Anderson, MnDOT)

Bryan Anderson conducted a discussion with members regarding potential strategies and recommendations to address FY 2025. Members noted that with the need to have the projects submitted to Anna Pierce by June 10th, projects would need to be selected before the next meeting of the ATP which will take place on April 10th, 2024. Discussion moved in favor of evaluating current projects for suitability for the CRP program so that projects for 2025 could be discussed and presented for approval at today's meeting, and projects for 2026 could be assembled, discussed, and presented for approval at the April 10th meeting of the NEMNATP. It was recognized that solicitations would be developed for FY 27 and beyond. Anderson related the process for the Transportation Alternatives and noted that a potential parallel process and timeline could be organized and planned to solicit projects and review them for the FY 27 process.

Anderson noted that the current CRP targets for NEMNATP are:

FY2025 - \$1,160,000
FY2026 - \$1,170,000
FY2027 - \$720,000
FY2028 - \$720,000

The ATP membership then discussed several projects that fit the CRP requirements and after discussion about merits and deliverability, it was settled on recommending that the following projects could absorb funds and there was confidence they could be delivered in 2025:

-Carlton Co. TED (a J-turn intersection project at TH 61 and Carlton CSAH 61) Project could absorb \$500,000 in CRP

-Cook Co. TA Project (a TA funded trail project connecting existing pedestrian pathways along the Gunflint Trail) could absorb an additional \$17,947 in CRP

-St. Louis County Hoyt Lakes (a project to enhance ADA elements and widen sidewalk) could absorb \$600,000

A motion to recommend the three projects stated above to receive additional funds through the Carbon Reduction Program was made by Mark LeBrun/JinYeene Neumann. Motion passes unanimously.

Discussion continued to determine a strategy to evaluate project readiness for FY2026. The ATP membership settled upon looking to MnDOT/State Aid to assemble a list of projects to consider for FY 2026 to be presented at the April meeting of the NEMNATP with the goal of evaluating, considering, and voting on projects to be recommended for funding for FY2026. This would permit the timeline to work, and the membership noted that for FY2027 and beyond, a small steering committee could be assembled to develop the solicitation process for the NEMNATP.

A motion was made by JinYeene Neumann/Cindy Voigt to review and select FY2026 CRP projects at the April 10, 2024 meeting of the NEMNATP. No opposition. Motion carries.

It was noted that next steps would involve Derek Fredrickson reaching out for 2026 potential projects, and evaluating capacity so these projects can be presented to the NEMNATP in April.

It was also noted that projects voted on for funding in FY2025 and FY2026 would need to fill out the toolkit. If a project already has a State Aid Project Number, it will need to be added to the STIP. Scott Madill requested that members who have had projects selected to please submit a project number, concise narrative description, and engineer's cost estimate to assist in not requiring a STIP amendment.

7. FY 2028 TA Project Recommendations (Clayton Beck, ARDC)

Clayton Beck provided a summary of the six applications for the federal Transportation Alternatives program for FY2028. He provided a description of each project, amount requested, total project cost estimate. He then described the TA Task Force review process and shared the TA Task Force recommendations for funding. The charts below reflect the projects and the recommendations that the TA Task Force brings to the ATP membership:

TA Projects scores

Project	Average Score	Request	Receive Less
St. Louis Co. - Rice Lake Rd Trail	44	\$600,000.00	400,000
Duluth Transit Amenity Improvements	43.625	\$462,420.79	\$250,000
Hermantown Connector Trail Seg 1 & 2	42	\$600,000.00	\$450,000
St. Louis Co. - 40th Ave W	38.7777	\$304,000.00	\$200,000
Mille Lacs Hwy 65 Trail	31.555	\$600,000.00	\$600,000
Floodwood Riverwalk	30.777	\$125,800.00	\$125,800

Recommendation

Awarded Project	Original Request	TA Task Force Recommendation for Funding
St. Louis Co. Rice Lake	\$600,000.00	\$600,000.00
Duluth Transit Amenities	\$462,420.79	\$460,000.00
Hermantown Connector Seg 1 & 2	\$600,000.00	\$540,000.00
St. Louis Co - 40th Ave W. Trail	\$304,000.00	\$200,000.00
Total	\$1,966,420.79	\$1,800,000.00

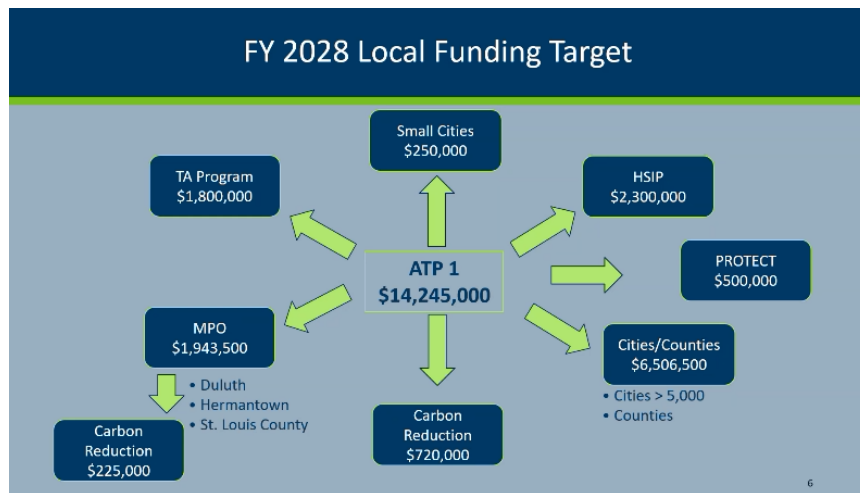
During discussion, it was noted that those who did not get selected for funding may want to look at future CRP solicitations as an alternative funding source. Beck noted that applicants would be notified about the status of their applications following this meeting, and that he would send a list of alternative funding sources to those who were not recommended to receive funds. A question about equity was asked and it was noted that while geographic distribution is one thing the TA Task Force considers, but that it is scores that guide the recommendation process. It was also discussed that additional attention may be needed to assist applicants when seeking funding for pavement rehabilitation. There are certain eligible ways trail reconstruction/rehabilitation can be sought for TA funds. It was noted that in the past, the NEMNATP itself did not elect to fund reconstruct/rehab projects. Discussion was had about trail pavement lifespan and how applicants could be supported in the future if seeking Transportation Alternatives funding for trail reconstruction funds.

A motion to approve adding FY2028 TA projects to the ATIP was made by JinYeene/Jason

For next steps, Jeff Madill asked that ARDC communicate with project awardees to ensure they communicate with State Aid to develop a project description and submit a project number request. A brief project narrative and best engineering cost estimate will also be needed. Clayton Beck communicated with the recommended project applicants following the meeting and passed this information along.

8. Approval of FY 2028 Federal Aid Candidate Projects –

Bryan Anderson presented FY 2028 Federal Aid Candidate Projects and began by demonstrating the current targets in the FY 2028 local program, noting some targets went up slightly.



Anderson next invited county highway engineers to discuss the projects for Federal Aid which include:

- Aitkin CSAH 4 - A bituminous overlay project, 14.4 miles with a Federal-aid request of \$1,626,625 in a \$3.55M project
- Pine CSAH 61 – Pine County – 3-inch mill and overlay, new markings. Minor arterial. This is a 9-mile segment. Federal-aid request of \$1.626,625 of a \$3.2 M project.
- Itasca CSAH 4- Located in the NW area of the county, this 16.1-mile project was Last rehabbed in 2007, is a major collector and sees significant logging traffic. Federal-aid request of \$1,626,625 of a \$4.1M project.
- St. Louis CSAH 25 – this milling and full-depth reclamation project will span 10.2 miles near Buhl/Kinney in Great Scott Township. It is a parallel roadway to 73 & 53, and is often used a detour. It is a preservation project. May look at paving shoulders to encourage bike/ped use. Last time rehabbed was in the 1990s. ADT around 700. Requesting \$1,626,625 in Federal-aid of a \$3.5M project.

A motion to approve the four federal-aid projects as presented was made by Karin Grandia/Jim Foldesi. Motion approved.

For next steps, Jeff Madill requested county engineers impacted to please assemble project narrative, cost estimates, project number/project number request to him and Paige Holte.

9. ARDC Workplan Updates (Clayton Beck, ARDC)

Clayton Beck presented information regarding ARDC's current work with Scenic Byway organizations including the North Shore Scenic Drive Council, the Superior National Forest Scenic Byway Council, and the Avenue of Pines Scenic Byway Council. ARDC's Carson Polomis reviewed and provided updates about ARDC's work with pedestrian and bicycle counting and invited members to reach out to him at cpolomis@ardc.org if they anticipate any counting needs in Spring/Summer 2024. Polomis then demonstrated the components of ARDC's trail conditions program and the electric assist bicycle ARDC uses to collect data

regarding paved trail conditions. Joined by ARDC's Michelle Pierson, Polomis showcased how the data is collected, assembled, and then can be displayed on interactive story maps to show pavement conditions. This information is currently being used by the Gitchi-Gami Trail Association and the MnDNR to consider trail rehabilitation needs on the Gitchi-Gami State Trail system.

10. MnDOT Updates

Bryan Anderson called attention to the Attachment #2 and presented slides showing MnDOT funding Targets from 2025-2028. He also highlighted current and ongoing work with corridor studies and transportation plans. He noted that while we didn't have time to have the PROTECT sub-group to present, but Bryan will send out an invite to all NEMNATP members so that we can provide guidance to Brian Shekleton at a meeting planned for the end of February.

11. Member Concerns/Future Agenda Topics

None brought forward.

12. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Jim Foldesi/Jason DiPiazza. Motion carries. Meeting adjourns at 12:01pm

The next meeting of the Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership will take place on Wednesday, April 10th, 2024. It will be a hybrid meeting and attendees are welcome to join via MS Teams or in person at MnDOT D1 Offices in Duluth at 10am.

Bold print denotes need for action.