



Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership Meeting

April 10, 2024 @ 10:00 am*
MnDOT District 1 Office / MS Teams

MEETING SUMMARY

Members in attendance: Bryan Anderson, Ron Chicka, Sarah Ciochetto, Kate Ferguson, Jason Fisher, Jim Foldesi, Derek Fredrickson, Rahya Geisler, Karin Grandia, Robert Hass, Stephen Hallan, Stacey Hawkins, Duane Hill, Jason Hollinday, Jim Johnson, Michael Kearney, Mark LeBrun, JinYeene Neumann, Trent Nicholson, Brandon Nurmi, Gary Peterson, Cindy Voigt, Matt Wegwerth, John Welle

Guests in attendance: Clayton Beck, Jason Fisher, Paige Holte, James Joerke, Scott Johnson, Scott Kyrola, Pat McGraw, Mike Moilanen, Prescott Morrill, Michelle Pierson,

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 protocols. Michelle Pierson reviewed attendance procedures. Chair Hass called the meeting to order and welcomed meeting attendees at 10:04am.

2. Committee Business

Chair Hass invited those gathered to look over the meeting summary from February 14, 2024. No comments or changes were brought forward.

A motion to approve the February 14, 2024 NEMNATP Meeting Summary was made by Jinyeene Neumann/Jim Foldesi. No further discussion. Motion carried.

3. Comments from Citizens Present

No comments were brought forward.

4. Presentation: Toward Zero Deaths Updates (Rahya Geisler)

Rahya Giesler introduced herself to the NEMNATP membership and went through a series of slides that showcased the goals of the Toward Zero Death(TZD) program, provided updates about data for the past few years and 2024 to date. MntZD saves lives by bringing together education, enforcement, emergency medical and trauma services, engineering, and everyone. Geisler showcased the six stakeholder coalitions that have been formed to date, and she is looking to convene a group in Cook and Koochiching counties as well. Geisler shared some data that shows that fatal crashes are up quite a bit in 2024 compared to this time in 2023. Data can be found in the presentation slides emailed out following this meeting. Geisler also shared links to upcoming TZD events:

<https://www.minnesotatzd.org/events/workshop/northeast/2024>

<https://www.minnesotatzd.org/events/workshop/metro/2024>

<https://www.minnesotatzd.org/events/conference>

5. Approval of TA Task Force Members

The TA Task Force membership is made up of members that serve 3-year terms. Membership is divided into three lists so that there is some continuity in membership. Task Force members who are up for renewal are asked if they would like to be nominated for another 3-year term. This year Russell Habermann, Molly Thompson and Tony Carter were up for renewal. Additionally, there is a vacancy in this category (formerly held by an Aitkin County local government representative). There is an additional vacancy that was previously held by a tribal government partner in the Year 3 column.

Jason Hollinday and Mike Moilanen noted that one of them may be willing to serve for the tribal government representative. ARDC will check in with Jason and Mike, and if we have a willing Task Force member nominee, we will bring that to the July meeting of the NEMNATP.

A motion to approve the renewal of Russell Habermann, Molly Thompson, and Tony Carter for another 3 year term was made by Duane Hill/Sarah Ciochetto. Motion carries.

6. Local Program Updates (Bryan Anderson)

a) Anderson noted that on March 20, 2024 he received an email that showed that FY 2028 targets dropped, due to updates inspired by 2020 census data resulting in 9.2% decrease. Anderson showcased how the ATP 1 Local Funding Target components will need to be reduced. He covered some challenges and some ideas for how to address the \$1.3M decrease. He noted that as 2028 Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) and PROTECT projects have not yet been programmed, so reductions in this area, will leave a reduction of \$1.1M decrease to the rest of the central pool of projects. Anderson noted that some ideas

could involve cutting the small cities set aside in FY 2028. MnDOT also reached out to St. Louis County(SLC) to see if they could advance construct (AC) projects which could help address cuts to the FY2028 project. Any additional funds that came in after, would then be used to backfill the 2028 SLC AC. Anderson noted that while funds can be borrowed from the future for AC projects, but cannot be pushed forwards.

After significant discussion, which included comments and questions by several members about why the 2020 census data is impacting 2028 projects, some of which have already been awarded and funded, instead of impacting the 2029 projects. Population and State Aid Needs were the only factors included in the formula. Anderson noted that all the ATPs are impacted by this outside of the metro area.

County engineers noted that one way to avoid impacting the Small Cities Program could be to have 4 counties receiving funds that year receive less funds (dividing the remaining \$250,000 by 4 counties) recognizing that this is reflected in MnDOT's equity spreadsheet and that it will even out over time.

A motion to approve St. Louis County's offer to AC \$850,000, and to divide the remaining \$250,000 by the 4 counties receiving funds in FY2028(Aitkin, Itasca, Pine, St. Louis) was made by Jim Foldesi/JinYeene Neumann. No opposition from any of the four counties impacted. Motion carried.

Jim Foldesi noted the cost participation policy drives the need for this funding source for the Small Cities Program. Foldesi will bring these examples to the Cost Participation Policy workgroup as part of the Minnesota County Engineers Association. Cindy Voigt also noted that the federal gas tax is not keeping pace, less funding to distribute.

Anderson noted that there will need to be changes to the DRAFT ATIP and invites participants to send any needed changes to him within the next five days.

b) Carbon Reduction Program Project Updates / FY 2026 CRP Recommendations (Bryan Anderson, MnDOT)

Anderson noted that ATP1 has already programed FY2025 projects. For FY2027 and 2028, the CRP subcommittee will be developing a solicitation and will be soliciting CRP projects statewide this fall.

For FY2026, Anderson introduced Sarah Ciochetto, Deputy Director of St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Rail Authority. One major piece of their work is to develop and maintain the Mesabi Trail. An approximate 4.7mile segment of trail connecting Aurora and Hoyt Lakes is seeking funding. Hoyt Lakes requested a spur in 2015. The Mesabi Trail is 7 miles away from connecting the mainline and it is an appropriate time to start looking at spurs. Hoyt Lakes could be a next step towards connecting to Lake County. Ciochetto noted that an engineer is already on board and is conducting the environmental permitting and pre-engineering for this segment. Ciochetto showed a map which showcased several route alignment options. The RRA would be able to construct in 2026.

A motion to approve awarding FY2026 Carbon Reduction Program funds to the

Aurora-Hoyt Lakes Mesabi Trail spur was made by Cindy Voigt/Jim Foldesi. Motion carries.

c) PROTECT Program Updates (Bryan Anderson, MnDOT)

FY2025, 2026, or 2027 projects have not been selected as MnDOT needed to get the Resilience Improvement Plan completed before selecting projects. Anderson noted that there is \$800,000 available in 2025; \$600,000 available in 2026; \$500,000 in 2027, and \$420,000 in 2028.

If a FY2025 project can be selected in the next two weeks, it can get into the RIP, which could then make it eligible for 87%/13%. If it does not get in the RIP, it would likely be funded at the 80%/20% level.

MPO projects can be used for protecting surface transportation due to climate impacts. Projects in the MPO are eligible. Anderson is going to check to see if rail projects are eligible. Discussion also noted that with smaller dollar figures available, reviewing projects as an ATP may be better than conducting a solicitation. Projects will need to demonstrate the resiliency need/impact.

Consensus with meeting attendees noted that ATP1 will not seek to conduct a solicitation process for this program.

Next steps will include emails from Derek Fredrickson to inquire about FY2025 and FY2026. Projects.

7. ARDC Workplan (Clayton Beck, ARDC)

ARDC staff shared updates about several active transportation projects currently underway as part of the RTAC workplan to include updates about the Safe Routes to School planning currently underway in Aurora for the Mesabi East School District. Staff are assisting city and public health officials in Two Harbors with their application to the Bicycle Friendly Community program. ARDC staff will attend and support a Bike Rodeo in Two Harbors on May 7, 2024. ARDC was also awarded a SRTS grant for the 2024-2025 school year to develop a new plan for the William-Kelley School in Silver Bay.

Beck noted that in the next few weeks he will be meeting with Bryan Anderson to begin putting together the FY2025 RTAC work plan. Beck noted projects that we anticipate being included in the next fiscal year, and invited meeting attendees to inquire in your communities if you have any transportation planning needs that could be supported through this project. Please email Clayton Beck at cbeck@ardc.org with any suggestions.

8. MIC Updates: I-35 Study Presentation (Ron Chicka, ARDC MIC)

Chicka presented a series of slides that show the I-35 Corridor Plan, the largest study that the MIC has ever done, looking towards long-term goals for the corridor. The project broke the I-35 corridor into segments that span from about Midway Road to 26th Avenue East. Looked at a 14 mile corridor, impacting about 29,000 residents. Looked at the history of the interstate as a disrupter, divider, and segregator of neighborhoods. There is a movement across the country to look at re-connecting communities. The City of Duluth was recently awarded a \$1.8M grant to reimagine connections in West Duluth and Downtown. Please see the slides that were emailed out following the meeting for more information about this project and next steps. Questions can be addressed to Ron Chicka at rchicka@ardc.org.

9. MnDOT Updates (Bryan Anderson, MnDOT)

Anderson went over MnDOT Funding Targets for the new guidance and presented a slide. In 2025, 2026, and 2027 you'll notice bumps, but in 2028 is where you will see a pretty dramatic reduction. New legislative money from last year's session will be seen in the 2029 program. Anderson presented a couple of program shuffles. Please see slides distributed following the meeting for more details.

Anderson also called attention to the MnDOT D1 FY2028 Program map document that was presented on the screen and printed for in-person meeting attendees. This handout was also emailed following the meeting.

10. Member Concerns/Future Agenda Topics

Clayton Beck displayed a list of possible future agenda items. Please let Beck know if you have any ideas for future presentations.

11. Round Robin Discussion

Duane Hill noted that there will be a public meeting on April 29th on the Twin Ports Interchange. He noted best case scenario, for the work on I-35, for Packages 1 & 2. Much of that is nearing completion/final cleanup stage. Expectation that work will be finished on the first two components this summer. For Packages 3 & 4, (Highway 53 to Piedmont bridge and Garfield Ave). Anticipating that the connection to Piedmont will be completed this year. Hoping to finish Garfield Ave connection this summer, too. Remaining of the 53 connection and the Garfield ramp in 2025 and complete final cleanup. In 2026, some remaining items including parking lots, and a skate board park and project finalization will take place.

On Blatnik, pile load testing will be taking place this summer under a technical service contract. Early cultural resources investigation will also take place this summer.

Over the next year, design will take place. RFPs will be due December 2025, with selection in June 2026. Foundation construction will begin in summer 2026. In 2027, it is anticipated that the Blatnik will be shut down. Hill noted that the anticipated re-opening of the bridge would take place in 2032.

MnDOT and WisDOT received significant federal funding through the INFRA program, and each state has committed funds and is still seeking grant funding.

Bryan Anderson noted that the last meeting a question was posed about TA Projects and eligibility of re-surfacing trails that have gotten to the end of life. Anderson noted that he had received information that shows that projects for trail rehab/resurfacing will be eligible projects for future solicitations.

Penny Simonsen noted that Pine City was awarded a Safe Routes to School Planning project, will begin in July. A trail project connecting Mora to Pine City and Hinckley has beginning steps, which will begin with pedestrian/bike counting this summer.

12. A motion to adjourn the meeting was brought by JinYeene Neumann/ Jim Foldesi at 11:54am. Motion carried.

Bold print denotes need for action.

The next meeting of the NEMNATP will be taking place on Wednesday, July 10, 2024 at the Aitkin County Board Room located at 307 2nd St NW, Aitkin, MN 56431 or via MS Teams link.