



Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership Meeting

October 8, 2025 @ 10:00 am

Blandin Foundation Conference Room (100 N Pokegama Ave, Grand Rapids, MN 55744)

SUMMARY

Members in attendance:

Bryan Anderson, Taylour Blakeman, Ron Chicka, Sarah Ciochetto, Jason DiPiazza, Kate Ferguson, Jim Foldesi, Derek Fredrickson, Rahya Geisler, Rick Goutermont, Stephen Hallan, Karin Grandia, Duane Hill, Kristi Kane, Mark LeBrun, JinYeene Neumann, Trent Nicholson, Penny Simonsen, John Welle, Debra White

Guests in attendance:

Travis Houle, Girma Feyissa, Jason Fisher, James Gittemeier, Scott Johnson, Michael Kalnbach, Derek Leuer, Vic Lund, Jeff Madill, Brian McCoy, Patrick McGraw, Eli Norlander, Michelle Pierson

1. Call to Order/Attendance

Travis Houle welcomed attendees and reviewed meeting protocols. Michelle Pierson reviewed attendance procedures. Chair Trent Nicholson called the meeting to order at 10:04am. Chair Nicholson welcomed attendees and thanked Blandin Foundation staff for hosting the meeting.

2. Approval of Meeting Summary

Chair Nicholson invited NEMNATP members to review the meeting summary from the July 9, 2025 meeting. A motion to approve the July 9, 2025 NEMNATP Meeting Summary was made by Karin Grandia/Jim Foldesi. No discussion. Motion carries.

3. Comments from Citizens Present

None brought forward.

4. 2026 Meeting Dates & Locations – Travis Houle (ARDC)

A motion to approve calendar year 2026 meeting dates and locations was made by John Welle/Jason DiPiazza. Discussion included desire to have centrally located in-person meeting locations. Members noted that Grand Portage has some nice meeting spaces though would require significant travel for most members. Also noted the St. Louis County building in Virginia may suit needs. The space at the IRRRB Mineland Reclamation Building was noted as a possible meeting space and it was noted that the Iron Trail Motors Center in Virginia has nice meeting spaces. Comments were also made that remote participation is also appreciated.

Meeting schedule for 2026:

Date	Time	Location
February 11, 2026	10:00am - Noon	MnDOT D1 Offices, Duluth
April 8, 2026	10:00am - Noon	St. Louis Co Public Works, Virginia
July 8, 2026	10:00am - Noon	Blandin Foundation, Grand Rapids
October 14, 2026	10:00am - Noon	Carlton Transportation Bldg, Carlton

5. ATP Elections – 2026 Vice Chair – Trent Nicholson (Chair)

Travis Houle thanked chair Nicholson for serving as NEMNATP Chair in 2025. It was noted that Jim Foldesi, as Vice Chair, will serve as CY2026 Chair of the NEMNATP.

Travis Houle showcased a chart showing Chair/Vice Chair history to help guide decision making.

Nicholson asked if there were any members who were willing to be nominated? Comments were made that it has been some time since Aitkin County and Pine County have served as leaders of this group. There were also comments thanking current Chair Trent Nicholson for serving as Chair in 2025. Jim Foldesi will ascend to Chair for CY2026. It was noted that any member may serve as Chair/Vice Chair.

Jim Foldesi nominated John Welle to serve as Vice Chair in 2026 with the understanding he would serve as Chair in 2027. Welle noted that he would accept the

nomination. Karin Grandia seconded. Motion carries.

6. TA/CRP/PROTECT Solicitation & Workshop – Travis Houle (ARDC)

Travis Houle shared slides showcasing updates to the Transportation Alternatives(TA), Carbon Reduction Program(CRP), and Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation(PROTECT) Programs. Houle noted that following today's meeting of the NEMNATP, that ARDC and MnDOT would be holding a hybrid-workshop on all three programs.

Houle demonstrated current targets for each program, showcased funding targets in the ATP region and in the Metropolitan Interstate Council region.

Houle noted that there would be one common Letter of Interest (LOI) this year which would invite applicants to think about if their project were eligible for more than one funding program.

Houle noted LOI solicitation is currently open, due October 31st. He showcased next steps and a timeline for the application window which will open December 1, 2025 and applications will be due January 9, 2026.

Copies of slides were distributed to the NEMNATP meeting list, and details about each program can be found on the website here: <https://nemnatp.org/>

Houle then showcased the list of current Transportation Projects Taskforce membership, noted two updates, and requested a motion to approve the membership list.

A motion to approve the list of Task Force members was made by Duane Hill/Sarah Ciochetto. No discussion. Motion carries.

7. Priority State/County Intersections – Vic Lund, P.E., PTOE (St. Louis County)

Vic Lund began a presentation by noting that innovations are necessary to address and actual reduce serious and fatal crashes in our region. He noted that we may think of the telephone as an invention, and the cell phone as an innovation on that technology and invited members to think about how we can look at the entire region's roadway system and attempt to apply innovations that may see reduction in harm on our roadways.

Lund presented historic crash data from our state, and the ATP-1 region. Sharing information from MnDOT's newly released update to the Minnesota Strategic Highway Saety Plan Update (2025-2029), Lund focused in on two of the main areas that result in serious injury and death in our region: lane departures and intersections.

Lund noted that intersection design is one area that state and local partners can seek to address changes to reduce harm. He presented designs for a variety of intersection treatments that are proven to reduce serious and fatal crashes and invited members to think about their systems and intersections. He reflected on St. Louis County's practice of using

this guidance in conjunction with HSIP funding to make a bigger impact on reducing harm at intersections. Lund noted that two key takeaways can include:

- a) Utilize a corridor viewpoint when planning and designing intersections
- b) Encourage a shift in industry practice to incorporate the safe system approach

8. HSIP Solicitation Overview – Derek Leuer, P.E. (MnDOT)

Derek Leuer, MnDOT State Traffic Safety Engineer and Girma Feyissa, FE State Aid, Local Roads Traffic Safety Engineer presented on the Greater Minnesota Highway Safety Improvement Program(HSIP).

Presenters provided background information about the HSIP program. They noted that the program is data-driven, based on crash data and systemic risk. The program can fund both proactive and reactive projects, with an emphasis on proactive projects. noted that the 2026 Greater MN HSIP application solicitation is open. There are some informational opportunities available, and applicants are also invited to submit applications for pre-submission to Girma Feyissa by October 31, 2025 at girma.feyissa@state.mn.us.

A 100% federally funded pilot rumble strip program is also available. There are informational webinars available on October 20, 2025 and October 30, 2025 on this program.

See more details here:

https://www.dot.state.mn.us/stateaid/scene/2025/09/hsip.html?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

9. Grand Rapids/La Prairie Corridor Study – Alex Peritz, P.E. (MnDOT D1)

Alex Peritz shared the timeline of a project to study the Hwy 2/Hwy 169 corridor in Grand Rapids to do a Corridor and Safety Study. With an emphasis on public and targeted engagement, and working with a design consultant, several possible treatments to the roadways and intersections have been studied.

Corridor study of the Hwy 2/Hwy 169 corridor from NW 19th Avenue to NE 7th Street from Hwy 2 to the Mississippi River. This corridor includes nine signalized intersections, 11 non-signalized intersections and five private accesses. MnDOT will be evaluating existing conditions (traffic volumes, operations and safety) and future conditions that account for growth and anticipated development in Grand Rapids and La Prairie.

The study will provide intersection and corridor recommendations to increase safety for all traffic and increased pedestrian and bicycle usage to and from destinations on both sides of Hwy 2 and Hwy 169.

Peritz showcased graphics that could demonstrate various options including a no-build, 5 lane concept, a 3 lane concept, and a One-Way Pair option. He also noted several changes to have right-in, right-out options and some adaptations to provide pedestrian refuge areas at crossing locations.

More information on this project may be found at:

<https://www.dot.state.mn.us/d1/projects/hwy2-169-grand-rapids-la-prairie/index.html>

and contact Alex Peritz with any questions at: Alex.Peritz@state.mn.us.

10. Blandin Foundation Overview – Amber Smith (Blandin Foundation)

The Blandin Foundation graciously hosted the NEMNATP meeting and Amber Smith provided a general overview of the Foundation’s history, vision, mission, and values.

Smith also presented on the Foundation’s long history of grant-making to improve the lives of rural Minnesotans, with an emphasis in the Itasca County region. Smith presented on types of grants, and noted that while solicitations are currently closed, they will re-open in 2026.

Penny Simonsen of East Central RDC noted that the City of Finlayson received a grant from the Blandin Foundation that permitted the city to update their comprehensive plan and showcased partnership between the city, ECRDC, and MnDOT in the transportation section of the plan and impact that made on the community.

More information may be found here:

<https://blandinfoundation.org/about/>

<https://blandinfoundation.org/programs/grants/>

Chair Nicholson thanked Amber and Melissa Johnson for hosting the NEMNATP meeting.

11. MPO Updates – Eli Norlander (MIC)

Eli Norlander introduced himself as the Transportation Planner at the Metropolitan Interstate Council and provided a few updates. He noted the TIP had recently been approved by the MIC Policy Board, and noted that next steps with the 2050 Sustainable Choices Plan include working with a consultant to develop an interactive map and executive summary. Work continues with a Safety Action Plan/Safe Streets for All Plan. Additionally, MIC staff are working alongside staff in the ARDC Planning Division and the ISD709/Duluth Public Schools District to conduct a district-wide Safe Routes to Schools Plan. The MIC is also beginning an update to their Public Involvement Plan, which was last updated in 2021. Eli Norlander may be contacted at enorlander@ardc.org

12. Member Concerns/Future Agenda Topics

Chair Nicholson requested that members think about future agenda topics and provide feedback to Travis Houle at thoule@ardc.org

13. A motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:04pm was made by Karin Grandia/John Welle. Motion carries.

Bold print denotes need for action.