

Rethinking I-94 Phase 2

Environmental Working Group

Monthly Meetings Recap:

The following is a summary of topics, outcomes, and action items that were discussed at the Environmental Working Group meetings

April 2019

- **Joint TAC and PPC Meeting Preparation:** In April, the Environmental Working Group focused on preparing for the April 28th facilitated joint meeting with the TAC and PPC. Since the meeting was held virtually, additional preparation and coordination was provided. The group prepared for this meeting by discussing roles and responsibilities, ground rules, breakout group discussion topics, presentation materials, and handout materials.
- **Cooperating and Participating Agencies:** The next Cooperating and Participating Agencies meeting is scheduled for May 12th, 2020. The topics to be discussed include Purpose and Need and Evaluation Criteria.

March 2019

- **Purpose and Need:** In February, the full purpose and need document was updated based upon the second review from the Environmental Working Group. The updated document (Version 3) is under review by the Technical Advisory Committee and the Policy and Planning Committee.
- **Definitions:** Definitions for mobility and connectivity, as well as other key terms and acronyms, are included in a glossary attached to the purpose and need document.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** The group discussed updated evaluation criteria and write-ups provided for each measure. Additional detail is being explored for the Goals and Livability measures.
- **Alternatives:** The group discussed the approach for defining alternatives related to the mainline and access/interchanges along with what could be considered as an element of an alternative (as opposed to a standalone alternative). The group recommended resolving the purpose and need and evaluation criteria before advancing into the range of alternatives.
- **Visual Impact Assessment:** The group discussed the timing and consideration of preparing a Visual Impact Assessment for this project along with new policies and guidance on the topic. Additional discussion will be provided on this topic.

February 2019

- **Evaluation Criteria:** In February, revisions were made to the evaluation criteria based on comments and discussion from January. It was suggested to look into the National Highway Institute's guidance on performing quantitative analysis for Environmental Justice measures. The group was informed that summaries of how the measures will be defined

are in progress. The group suggested that definitions from Rethinking I-94 Phase 1 be used to define goals and livability framework measures.

- **Revised Purpose:** During the February meeting, the group agreed to revise bullet #3 of the Purpose document to “Improve mobility for people and goods on, along, and across the I-94.” This revision was intended to align with the discussion provided at the facilitated TAC/PPC meeting.
- **Notice of Intent:** The group was also informed that the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a tiered EIS had been delivered and it was published in the Federal Register on February 20, 2020. The group also discussed ways to inform the public regarding the NOI. How information will be distributed will be further discussed with the public engagement efforts.
- **Introduction to Alternatives:** During the February meeting, the group discussed an initial list of range of alternatives for feedback and to discuss how alternatives will be addressed/developed for the project. The group discussed how to consider certain elements/features that could be applicable to multiple alternatives and may not be warranted as a standalone alternative. This was an initial discussion related to alternatives. Additional discussion related to the development of the range of alternatives will occur with the TAC

January 2019

- **Plain Language:** In January, the group discussed the distribution and timing of plain language documents to align with public meetings and the concurrence points for the participating and cooperating agencies.
- **Purpose and Need:** In January, the second review of the full purpose and need document was underway for this group. Comments provided by the group were updated in February and added to the version that was provided to the TAC for review. Outstanding data items include medium truck data and future bridge conditions (in process).
- **Evaluation Criteria:** In January, the group discussed updated evaluation criteria, comments/responses from the TAC review, and the proposed schedule for committee and public review.

December 2019

- **Facilitated Meeting:** At the December meeting the group discussed the comments that were received at the joint facilitated meeting between the TAC and PPC on the logical termini, purpose, goals, and evaluation criteria. Additional text revisions were discussed to include in updated documents that will be presented to the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) which will likely be in February. The group also discussed commitment letters that will be coming from MnDOT to the two cities and counties regarding their efforts for studying problems outside of the logical termini. Draft letters were presented for review and comment. MnDOT intends to get the letters out by mid-January.
- **Notice of Intent:** Anticipated publication may be in February.
- **Purpose and Need – Revised Draft:** At the December meeting the group also discussed the upcoming revisions that will be made to the draft Purpose and Need document. A revised

draft was targeted for distribution ahead of the end of the month. It was noted that some I traffic data was still needed, and that bridge data was also missing. Discussions with the Metropolitan Council and MnDOT were still ongoing regarding the overarching documents framing the purpose and need. Subsequent updates to the draft purpose and need document may be needed, but for the upcoming draft, to maintain current form and content with information regarding the regional Transportation Policy Plan and the State Highway Improvement Plan (MnSHIP) remaining as other considerations.

- Evaluation criteria was not discussed at the December meeting. However, revised criteria were prepared and distributed to the Project Management Team and to the Environmental Working Group committee members in late November. The revised criteria incorporated some of the measures suggested by the Metropolitan Council.
- Purpose and Goals: The purpose and goals documents have been updated based on discussion from the 12/11 TAC/PPC meeting. See facilitated meeting discussion above.
- Logical Termini: Based on the 12/11 TAC/PPC meeting, WSB has drafted a letter stating MnDOT's commitment to study beyond the proposed logical termini. MnDOT will share comments of the first draft of the letter. See facilitated meeting discussion above.

November 2019

- Facilitated Meeting: At the November meeting, the group discussed the agenda, materials, and roles of those presenting at the joint meeting between the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Policy and Planning Committee (PPC) on December 11, 2019. Updates to the logical termini, purpose and goals were discussed. Outlines of the draft presentations were presented and assignments were given for refining the educational materials on the environmental process.
- Notice of Intent: Prior to the November meeting the revised NOI was been submitted to FHWA for its review process. The NOI is in good shape for publishing early 2020. At the December meeting, the group discussed timing the publication of the NOI with the meeting of the Cooperating and Participating agencies, the coordination plan, the schedule, and the draft Purpose and Need.
- Purpose and Need – Revised Draft: At the November meeting the group discussed whether to move pedestrian and bicycle needs from “secondary” needs to “primary” needs. It was discussed that “primary” and “secondary” does not denote that something is less important, rather what is driving the project. There will likely be additional discussion, but for now, the pedestrian and bicycle needs will remain as secondary. The group also discussed a letter submitted to the project regarding evaluation criteria and project purpose/need by the Metropolitan Council. MnDOT was preparing a response to the letter and would be having follow-up discussions which could influence the purpose and need document.
- Revised Evaluation Criteria: At the November meeting, the group discussed the Metropolitan Council's letter regarding evaluation criteria that was presented to the TAC in October. The Council indicated that they wanted more criteria associated with non-

motorized travel and travel choices. They also wanted their Transportation Policy Plan to be the focus or overarching framework for the development of the evaluation criteria. The committee discussed that the purpose and need and the social, economic, and environmental (SEE) resources needed to be the framework for the criteria and to look at the suggestions provided by the Met Council to determine if some of their suggested measures from the letter made sense to incorporate. WSB agreed to review the criteria suggested by Met Council staff to see if they addressed measures under purpose and need, SEE resources or project goals.

October 2019

- **Facilitated Meeting:** The group worked on the agenda and goals for a joint TAC and Policy and Planning meeting to discuss draft environmental documents related to: logical termini, project purpose, goals and evaluation criteria
- **Notice of Intent:** The NOI has been submitted to FHWA for its review process. The NOI is anticipated to be published late 2019/early 2020. Edits were discussed for submitting the information for publication.
- **Participating and Cooperating Agencies:** The group discussed confirmed agencies and how to integrate those that have not responded to the formal request. The date for a first meeting of the agencies to present draft information regarding the project background, logical termini, purpose and goals was also discussed.
- **Purpose and Goals:** The purpose and goals documents have been updated based on comments provided by the TAC. The group discussed the comments and the revised documents. WSB will make edits as needed and send updated versions to the TAC.
- **Logical Termini:** WSB presented a revised logical termini document based on the comments received from the TAC. There were some comments that required additional group discussion. WSB will update the logical termini document and responses to comments based on the feedback received. Information will be resent to the TAC.
- **Purpose and Need Comments:** WSB presented the comments received on the draft document to the group and highlighted the comments that were being addressed. The group discussed approximately 15 comments that required additional clarification and input. WSB will make the revisions to the document and bring back to the group at the November meeting. An outline of the document and key elements/ideas will be presented to the TAC in October.

There are still some items for which data is needed. Data is still needed for some existing traffic condition information, transit travel times and future traffic conditions.

- **Evaluation Criteria:** The group discussed the comments recently provided by the TAC on the evaluation criteria and framework that were presented in September.

September 2019

- Notice of Intent: The NOI has been submitted to FHWA for its review process. The NOI is anticipated to be published late 2019/early 2020.
- Revised Evaluation Criteria: The group reviewed a performance evaluation framework to assess how alternatives will be evaluated. A set of evaluation criteria have been prepared to be used as part of the Scoping Decision Document and the Tier 1 EIS. The evaluation criteria will be used to assess the project purpose and need, SEE impacts, and Goals/Livability as outlined in Phase 1. Information on draft evaluation criteria will be presented to the TAC in September.
- Purpose and Need Comments: The group has reviewed and provided comments to the initial Purpose and Need draft. The document is currently being updated to reflect the comments prior to being submitted to the TAC for review and comment.
- Purpose and Goals: The purpose and goals documents have been updated based on comments provided by the TAC.
- Logical Termini: WSB is in the process of revising the logical termini document based on comments provided by the TAC. It will be brought to the environmental working group for additional review before being presented to the TAC.