

Area Transportation Partnership 7 (ATP 7)

Draft Minutes of January 4, 2019 Meeting – MnDOT, Mankato

Members Present: Ronda Allis, Lisa Bigham, Terry Genelin, Seth Greenwood, Peter Harff, Steve Koehler, Jack Kolars, Mike Kuhle, Greg Ous, Craig Rempp, Tim Stahl, Stefan Gantert (for Ryan Thilges), Don Wachal, Matt Widboom

Members Absent: Jeff Johnson, Patrick LaCourse

Others Present: Angelica Altamirano, Cathleen Amick, Charles Androsky, Rebecca Arndt, Pete Bode (R9), Annette Fiedler, Sam Parker, Angie Piltaver, Dan Sarff, Philip Schaffner, Paul Vogel, Anne Wolf, Debra Yates

Legislative attendees: Senator Nick Frentz, Representative Jeff Brand, Senator Rich Draheim, Representative Paul Torkelson

Welcome and Introductions

- Steve Koehler welcomed everyone. Introductions were made.
- Updated membership list was provided and affirmed.
- The minutes from September 14, 2018 were approved.
- Greg Ous provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

Overview of Area Transportation Partnership (ATP)

Ronda Allis provided an overview of the ATP, including origin, function, membership, major federal surface transportation legislation, surface transportation program funding process and statewide allocations, and ATP-managed funding overview. Provided a comparison chart showing the different levels of funding for ATPs statewide. Described the activities of the ATP, including the solicitation of projects for four fiscal years, evaluation, prioritization, Area Transportation Improvement Program (ATIP) development, review, and submittal to MnDOT Central Office for inclusion in the State Transportation Investment Program (STIP).

Steve Koehler then provided an overview of ATP-7, and discussed that the group attempts to be inclusive, reviews operating procedures, has an open and transparent process, posts its meeting minutes on the website and tries to be “jurisdictionally blind” when evaluating and selecting projects. He indicated that he felt the program works well.

2019 – 2022 STIP Status

Ronda Allis indicated that the 2019-2022 STIP was approved by FHWA on 10/30/18.

2019 – 2022 STIP Amendments

Debra Yates provided a handout with a summary of the projects that were amended since the previous meeting. A rail crossing project was added in Granada with an additional \$5,000 in

federal funds provided. A project in Watonwan County on CSAH-2 added work to the scope, but did not result in any change in federal funding.

Steve Koehler asked Debra Yates to explain when amendments are needed. Debra Yates explained that there are two types of amendments: formal and administrative. Formal amendments are required for significant changes to projects, including significant cost changes, significant scope changes, or when the project is lengthened by more than 3/10^{ths} of a mile. These must be approved by the ATP, MPO (when in the MPO area), Central Office and FHWA. Administrative changes are minor only and Central Office must make a final review of these. A full guide that shows all of the requirements can be found here and is called the STIP Amendment and Modification guidance.

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/stip.html>

2020 – 2023 STIP Funding Guidance

Ronda Allis explained that the 2020-2023 funding guidance had been released, and briefly explained ATP-7 funding. She indicated that the TA/SRTS, STP-Small Urban and STP-Rural solicitations close on January 4 at the end of the business day. Submitted applications will begin to be processed once the solicitation is closed.

ATP-7 Managed 2020-2023 STIP Development Timeline

Ronda Allis provided a handout showing the ATP-7 solicitation flowchart, and explained that a minor change was made to the timing of MAPO TAC and MAPO Policy Board reviews and approvals within the overall process.

Discussion of ATP Managed Programs

Steve Koehler provided an overview of the STP-Small Urban program, which is for cities with a population of 5,000 or more. The program has \$2.365 million available and can fund projects at 80% with a 20% cost share.

Tim Stahl provided an overview of the STP-Rural program, which provides funds for 13 counties. The program has \$3.135 million in available funds in 2023 to program. Projects are vetted at a meeting that includes all counties. The counties use an equity factor which is based on the distribution of state aid funds. This factor is used in the scoring of the projects. The counties typically select two projects per year to split the available funds.

Jack Kolars gave an overview of the Transportation Alternatives (TA) and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. The SRTS program includes \$2 million in funding statewide. Eligible projects must be delivered in 2020 or 2021, and can be funded at 100%, with no local match required. The TA program funds projects using an 80/20 split with a maximum \$700,000 award. The solicitation this year is a joint solicitation, where SRTS projects will be first considered for statewide SRTS funds, and if not selected, will be then considered for TA funds for 2023. Jack Kolars noted that there were 5 proposals submitted thus far under the joint TA/SRTS solicitation.

Ronda Allis explained the value of the Letter of Intent (LOI) process, which saves communities time and resources by completing a one page application to determine whether the potential project should move forward to a full application.

Discussion of District Managed Programs

Peter Harff gave an overview of the District Managed Program, including federal and state funds as well as bonds. He explained the process of developing the 10 year plan (CHIP) and that project costs are identified 5-6 years in advance through a scoping process, and that sometimes projects move ahead or back a year depending on costs and overall funding for that year. This includes keeping an inventory of “shelf” projects that are ready to move forward so that all funds are expended.

Philip Schaffner provided an overview of the new project selection policy and process, including an overview of scoring for a variety of projects that are included in the 10-Year Plan (CHIP).

Lisa Bigham gave an overview of the Local Partnership Program (LPP), which generally include locally-led projects where MnDOT funds are provided to fund portions of projects located on state trunk highways, such as at the intersection of county and state highways. There is a \$700,000 set aside for these projects, and generally these projects represent an opportunity for MnDOT to partner with cities or counties. There are currently two LPPs that are being funded, including one in Springfield and another in Blue Earth County that includes two roundabouts.

Discussion of Centrally Managed Programs

Lisa Bigham explained the Bridges Off System (BROS) program, which allocates \$5.3 million statewide for bridge projects. These include bridges that are typically not on the federal highway system and generally not on township roads.

Peter Harff explained the HSIP program, which has a goal of reducing serious injuries and fatal crashes. In 2018 this program provided \$33 million in funds statewide.

Debra Yates explained the Rail program, which generally provides funds to eliminate hazards at rail crossings, including consolidation of crossings, replacement of antiquated equipment and adding equipment at crossings that currently do not have anything.

Ronda Allis provided an overview of the Transit program, which generally provides funds for bus purchases. She noted, though, that in recent years, the \$320,000 set aside for buses has been funded by MnDOT Central Office rather than being taken out of the STP-Small Urban funds. She indicated this could change in the future.

Regional Transportation Updates

Paul Vogel gave an overview of the Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (MAPO), and discussed the communities covered, the composition of the organization, the role of the organization and the various studies undertaken by the organization. He indicated that MAPO has identified over \$200 million in unfunded projects needed within the MAPO area.

Annette Fiedler with SRDC (Southwest Regional Development Commission) shared that the Luverne SRTS planning study is underway, and that SRDC is a partner in the Manufacturing Perspectives Study. She also indicated that SRDC is seeing many wind, solar and wind re-power applications coming through at this time.

Sam Parker shared that Region 9 has the Waseca and St. Clair SRTS studies underway, has been participating in scoping outreach efforts in many communities, and has been working with MAPO on transit. Additionally, Region 9 has been involved in the Letter of Intent process for the current TA/SRTS solicitation, and has been working with Waseca on economic development initiatives.

State and Federal Legislative Discussion

Greg Ous opened the meeting to a discussion with the legislative representatives in attendance. Topics included the proposed increase in the gas tax, which would provide additional transportation funding, safety, and the difficulties in apportioning funds among competing state interests. Legislators indicated they held different positions on the gas tax, with several supporting it and others not supporting it. The Corridors of Commerce program was touched on by Representative Torkelson, who indicated it may not be funded again in the next session due to the large sum of money that was awarded on projects last year.

Bridge funding allocations were discussed, with Tim Stahl indicating that the recent step toward improving funding for local system bridges was helpful, but not nearly enough for county needs. He indicated that the larger bridges exhaust the majority of funds leaving many counties in the position of having to use local or state aid funds to fund local bridge projects.

Transit was also discussed, with legislators suggesting that transit in Greater Minnesota may need to become more flexible and incorporate more technology. Cathleen Amick, Transportation Director at United Community Action Partnership, provided insights into current development of 5-year plans for transit and that they are seeing increasing need for services in rural areas, but that ridership overall is low, staffing is low and wages are not competitive for drivers. Additionally, locating safe transit stops is a priority.

Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAV) were discussed with there being disagreement among the legislators on whether funds should be allocated at this time on research or development of CAV systems, and whether the state should be a leader in research and development in this area or allow “better weather” states to lead in this area.

Taxation related to electric vehicles was also discussed, with legislators indicating that a \$75 per year fee had been adopted for electric vehicles to replace the lost revenue from gas taxes for these vehicles.

Next meeting

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 8, 2019.