PROCEEDINGS OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, January 10th, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Stephanie Halford, Chairman, called the January 10th, 2024, meeting of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee to order at 1:31 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following member(s) were present: Wayne Zacher, NDDOT-Local Government; Andrea Edwardson, Grand Forks Planning; George Palo, NDDOT-Local District; Nancy Ellis, East Grand Forks Planning; Jon Mason, MnDOT District 2; Steve Emery, East Grand Forks Engineering; Rich Sanders, Polk County Engineer; Dale Bergman, Cities Area Transit; and David Kuharenko, Grand Forks Engineering.

Absent: Brad Bail, Ryan Brooks, Ryan Riesinger, Nick West, Tom Ford, Troy Schroeder, Carter Hunter, Michael Johnson, Lane Magnuson, Nels Christianson, and Jason Peterson.

Guest(s) present: Erika Shepard, MnDOT MPO Coordinator; Josh Peterson, FHWA-MN Division; Siri Simons, MnDOT Office of Sustainability and Public Health; and Blue Webber, Bolton and Menk.

Staff: Stephanie Halford, GF/EGF MPO Executive Director; Teri Kouba, GF/EGF MPO Senior Planner; Tyler Manske, MPO Planner; and Peggy McNelis, GF/EGF MPO Office Manager.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Halford declared a quorum was present.

INTRODUCTIONS

Halford asked that guests attending the meeting please introduce themselves.

MATTER OF APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 13, 2023, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MOVED BY ELLIS, SECONDED BY BERGMAN, TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 13, 2023, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, AS PRESENTED.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

ACTION ITEMS:

MATTER OF APPROVAL OF 2024-2027 T.I.P. AMENDMENTS

Kouba reported that the NDDOT finalized their S.T.I.P., and when comparing it with our T.I.P. we found some differences that we needed to address.

Kouba referred to the staff report and stated that she can go through the changes one by one, but a lot of them are just amendments to the project costs. She said that there are some totally new projects that need to be added as well as some amendments to the project description and/or the scope of work.

Ellis asked if the District or the City had any comments on these changes. Edwardson responded that she will attempt to regurgitate what Al and Dave talked about earlier about having better explanations for some of the T.I.P. Amendments in the staff report of why they are being changed, or why some are being changed by only a small amount, she doesn't know if it was more of a tracking request or something like that, there was a brief conversation about that but since Dave isn't here she thought she would attempt to explain what was discussed.

Kuharenko reported present.

Kuharenko asked if this is something that the MPO decided to do or was it a request from the DOT. Kouba responded that this is something that the MPO has always done. Zacher commented that it depends on, sometimes the small changes, they have been questioned why the S.T.I.P. doesn't match the T.I.P., and cost is, he is guessing, part of it, and he had the same comment when he was looking through it, it wasn't that big of an issue to him but part of it is that they have been questioned in the past; their S.T.I.P. is limited to the number of characters so if you look at the S.T.I.P. the costs are shown in thousands of dollars as opposed as down to the actual cost as shown in the T.I.P. so he is guessing that is part of it. He added that one of the questions he had was that on those earlier sheets it has the supporting information with the lump sum tables, was that in the previous one, because it doesn't appear that it is on the tables that were submitted. Kouba responded that the lump sums were in Amendment #1, and this is Amendment #2, and they were able to add kind of a tracking of when amendments are going to be finalized, so they will finalize this amendment on January 17th at our Executive Policy Board meeting. She added that the reason why you will see that some of them have two dates on them.

Zacher commented that he is fine with that approach, but another thing you could take a look at or consider doing instead of the dates, because, yes it is approved at the local level, but it doesn't necessarily mean that he gets that letter signed off on on that date, so you could put which modification number it is; he is just going to continue one through whatever, he stated calling them adjustments as opposed to amendments, and administrative modifications, so you could put the number in there as well, but he is fine either way, just so you are aware of what he is doing.

Kuharenko said that a question he has, and this is more of process and clarification on his end, so last month we went through all the grant requests, budget requests, how do those requests get

implemented into the T.I.P. He stated that part of the reason he is asking is because of the Washington Street project from 1st to 8th, he knows they had ended up resubmitting that one at a higher dollar amount, so how does that process work, how does everything work to get there between the applications, the T.I.P. and then the S.T.I.P. Zacher responded that it all depends on; so just because you are submitting an application doesn't mean the project is getting accepted; so then they would get the project number set up, so he sees a list of project changes that some through on a weekly basis, and if there are any changes within the MPO/MPA area, he will send the information to Teri, whether it warrants an amendment or not, he does try to identify those areas where an amendment may be needed, but it is just more through the correspondence because again if it is a grant application that is being submitted this year it likely isn't a 2024 project. Kuharenko said it extends out further because you can go out to 2027 on these. Zacher agreed, adding that it is the 2024-2027 T.I.P., and so we can add them later; on those out years it is a little easier because the T.I.P. amendment doesn't need to be done immediately, but if we are working on an amendment we can include it so that it gets in there, so you will see likely see some changes, but it may not need to show up immediately, it may show up in the next T.I.P., it may show up as part of another T.I.P. amendment. Kuharenko said, then, that the fact that our current T.I.P. doesn't necessarily line up with the grant paperwork we submitted is not an issue. Zacher responded that it isn't an issue yet. Kuharenko stated that that was the big thing he wanted to make sure we are covered, because if the S.T.I.P. doesn't match the T.I.P. you can run into issues. Zacher responded that that is correct.

Kuharenk said that the only other comment that he has on this is probably in the background section of the staff report; if you could just throw in a sentence or two, whenever we get these T.I.P. amendments, as to maybe a real brief explanation as to what is causing the changes, it can help bring some clarity as we are reading the staff report, that would probably be the only note he would have. Kouba responded that as she said, this is kind of the, now that the NDDOT has their finalized S.T.I.P. out, that we just kind of go, we have always just kind of gone back to make sure that we are aligned so that Federal Highway isn't going to be asking those questions of why our T.I.P. is not aligned with the S.T.I.P., as well as we do have some totally new projects like the pavement marking, and then some changes to the U.S.2 in East Grand Forks, that scope of work changed. She added that we will always have new ones, of course, coming next month.

Kuharenko asked, with the pavement marking project, is any of that in and around town or is it just in the district. Kouba responded it is in the district. Palo added that it is within the District, but part of it will probably go through the town, but there won't be any cost to the MPO, it is all federal and state funded. He said that the hold-up on that right now, they just got a document changing the width of the striping, so they are trying to go through to see what places they are going to do a change order on and which they are just going to do a continuation of projects to get the new striping in so the numbers are going to be kind of fluid right now. Zacher commented that those numbers changed again today or yesterday; the widths changed based on the new MUTCD.

MOVED BY ELLIS, SECONDED BY PALO, TO APPROVE FORWARDING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD THAT THEY APPROVE THE 2024-2027 T.I.P. AMENDMENTS, AS PRESENTED.

Voting Aye: Emery, Palo, Sanders, Ellis, Bergman, Mason, Edwardson, Kuharenko, and

Zacher.

Voting Nay: None. Abstain: None.

Absent: Peterson, Riesinger, Schroeder, Brooks, West, Ford, Bail, Johnson, Hunter,

Magnuson, and Christianson.

NON-ACTION ITEMS:

MATTER OF CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAM TOOLKIT PRESENTATION

Halford reported that this is a presentation and non-action item. She said that Sir Simons from MnDOT is online and will be giving the presentation.

Simons stated that she is the Sustainability Program Supervisor with MnDOT's Office of Sustainability and Public Health. She referred to a slide presentation and explained that she will be giving an informational update on the Carbon Reduction Program Toolkit.

Simons said that in terms of what she will cover today, she will talk about the Carbon Reduction Strategy, which is the new Statewide Plan; the Carbon Reduction Program, which is a relatively new program; and the Draft Carbon Reduction Toolkit that MnDOT is getting ready to release. She stated that if you take anything away from her presentation today, the keys are that the Carbon Reduction Strategy is a new Statewide Plan that was set up to help us better reduce carbon pollution; Minnesota is continuing to receive funds from the relatively new Carbon Reduction Program, the funds are available to MPOs for projects; MPOs will be asked to select projects for FY2025 through FY2026 funding this spring, and then they are preparing resources in the form of a toolkit to help ensure that the projects that are selected for CRP funds align with the recently produced carbon reduction strategy.

Simons stated that in terms of the carbon reduction program, just as a refresher this is the program that was established under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for the purpose of reducing emissions from the transportation sector, specifically from on-road highway sources and the money can be used first to develop state carbon reduction strategies, which Minnesota and all other states in the United States have done and recently had to submit by November to meet the federal deadline for these new plans and then the money can also be used to fund projects designed to reduce transportation emissions, which they have done and will continue to do in Minnesota.

Simons said that when it comes to the strategy itself, this includes priorities for reducing carbon emission, and the priorities are identified based on related statewide plans and policies, including the 2022 Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan, 2022 Climate Action Framework, and the 2019 Pathways To Decarbonization And Transportation Report, so the framework includes categories and then strategies within those categories and project types within those strategies, and these will all guide how MnDOT and Partner Agencies use transportation funds to reduce emission.

Simons stated that going forward, now that we have the plan, any investments from the Carbon Reduction Program should align with the strategy, and while it isn't final yet, because they haven't received federal approval, they are expecting to get federal approval or feedback on their draft in the next month or two, and they will certainly share an update once they receive that feedback.

Simons said that we are now getting into the categories of strategies, the first one is the Electrification category, and in this category, you have three strategies; installing EV charging infrastructure, purchasing or leasing EVs or ZEVs, and supporting education and outreach to promote EVs and ZEVs. She stated that she won't get into the project types that are listed in this category, but an example of a project type would be installing electric vehicle charging stations for light duty vehicles.

Simons said that the next category is Travel Options, there are a number of strategies in this section and they range from installing and maintaining infrastructure for walking, biking and rolling; to planning and designing engineering infrastructure improvements, also for walking, biking and rolling; implementing context of design for travel options; adding high capacity transit options; adding intercity and regional public transit options; and implementing travel demand management. She stated that an example of project type under these strategies would be installing a new sidewalk or completing engineering for a new bike trail.

Simons stated that the third category is Low Carbon Infrastructure and System Management. She said that there are three strategies in this category, which include optimizing transportation system management and operations; utilizing low carbon methods for construction and maintaining transportation infrastructure; and supporting renewable energy generation. She said that project types in these strategy areas include things like signal timing improvement or installing solar panels on the right-of-way.

Siimons commented that in addition to the categories and strategies and project types in the carbon reduction strategies also have project evaluation criteria that can be applied when selecting projects, particularly with the Carbon Reduction Program, so of course when we are talking about the Carbon Reduction Program our key goal is to reduce emissions through transportation projects but our policy goals and public input also point at the importance of other factors when selecting projects for CRP funding, specifically partner agencies noted that the CRP can support objectives in our Statewide Multi-Modal Transportation Plan related to critical connection, healthy, equitable communities, and transportation safety. She stated that when she

says that projects need to align with the CRS, one of the ways that can happen is by evaluating project proposals based on this set of criteria.

Simons stated that the last reminder she wants to share before getting into the Draft Toolkit was just a reminder about how the CRP funds are distributed; Minnesota is receiving about \$20.5 million dollars annually from the program and that money is then allocated. She said that 35% of it can be spent anywhere in the State of Minnesota, they elected to distribute that money through the MnDOT Districts; and then some of the funds are allocated directly to MPOs; and the remaining funds can be spent in rural areas, and so they opted, in Minnesota, to distribute those to our Area Transportation Partnerships. She stated that the key takeaway on this slide is that the Carbon Reduction Program projects are not being selected centrally, they are being distributed through our regional partners, and this MPO has money to spend on projects, and she knows that there have already been some discussion about some of the concerns about the small amount of money that is available from this federal program, and ways that the funds can be combined across years to make it more worthwhile to federalize our projects, and we can talk more about that today if people are interested in further discussion later.

Simons commented that, getting into the draft toolkit, they are preparing this as a resource to the different entities that are responsible for selecting projects for Carbon Reduction Program funding, so the idea is that they will share the toolkit, and it will include a template solicitation or application for a carbon reduction program project, then the project selection committee can use that template as is and share it to get your application or they can amend it slightly based on the regional needs, and then applicants will supply their information, submit their proposals, and then the selection committee will be able to review those proposals based on what is provided, with some additional guidance from their toolkit. She stated that really their goal is to make this as easy as possible because it does involve some relatively new technical information about greenhouse gas emission analysis and it is a fairly tight turnaround, they are talking about selecting FY2025 and FY2026 projects in the spring and they know that will take some work but they hope that this toolkit will take a little bit of the burden off of our partners.

Simons stated that she will now share the contents of that draft application. She said that the first part is asking about project readiness, and so the template application will have project proposers to give a brief description of their project, and some of the milestones that have occurred so far, so they can provide whatever level of detail they have available when it comes to describing engineering studies, etc, and this will allow reviewers to determine whether or not projects are eligible and ready to be funded especially when we are talking about FY2025.

Simons said that the second part of the template application is the use of the Carbon Remission Tool. She stated that she thinks this is one of the most valuable parts of the toolkit, so they worked with a consultant to prepare a spreadsheet based tool and applicants can identify the project type that they are proposing, and then navigate to a tab in the spreadsheet and enter a little bit of information and then get the greenhouse gas emissions reduction from their project, as well as the cost effectiveness of the greenhouse gas emissions reduction from their project. She stated that what is nice about this tool is that it leverages state of art methodology for greenhouse gas emissions, it gives results in a consistent format, which she knows has been a

challenge for some areas when they have a number of different projects, certainly during the first round of solicitation, she knows they were instances where there was a really wide range of projects, the were sort of providing their emissions reduction and different units and it was challenging to explore and compare all of that different information so this tool helps to provide something that is very consistent when it comes to utilizing the emissions reduction across a wide variety of projects.

Simons referred to slides that showed examples of how the tool works and went over them briefly.

Simons commented that the last part of the template application involves getting into the cobenefit of the project, so the first question asks about equity and asks for the applicant to describe how the project addresses disparities faced by disadvantaged communities, then the template application offers four different tools the applicant can use to justify their response; and she wants to note here that some feedback they received is that four different tools is a lot but they offer this range of tools because they heard that the climate and economic justice screening tool, which aligns with Justice 40, is somewhat insufficient in capturing all the disadvantaged communities throughout Minnesota, so they would be looking for an applicant just to justify their response based on one of these, but if your MPO feels like this is too many tools you can certainly adapt the template application and reduce the number of tools you are asking people to use, maybe you just want to use one, or maybe you want to allow them to use two, so they are providing that level of possibilities, they aren't intending for it to be used word for word by every single MPO in the MnDOT District.

Simons stated that the second question is about safety, and again asking for a brief narrative, just writing how the project will improve safety, encouraging applicants to provide connection to existing safety studies or plans and then also asking them to comment on whether or not it is in an area with a high crash rate.

Simons said that the third question is about access, so there is a prompt to describe how the project improves non-motorized access and transit or shared mobility access to key locations, as well as if the project improves travel efficiency, and there aren't necessarily resources provided for applicants to help justify their response, it is really up to them to provide a narrative here.

Simons stated that the last question touches on health and so the template application asks applicants to describe how their project improves localized air quality, as well as if is supports active transportation, and they do offer a list of local pollutants as well as the EJScreen Tool for applicants to use to justify their response.

Simons commented that the toolkit includes a scoring rubric that can help selection committees score the narrative that they get in response to the questions, and they are relatively generic rubrics, so it is on a five-point scale, for each narrative the top of the scoring rubric would be a five and so that would be for a project that showed an outstanding connection to the co-benefit by providing documentation, plan narrative, sort of that thorough justification for their response,

and then on the low end they would receive a zero if they can't demonstrate any connection to the co-benefit.

Simons stated that, a brief recap, their toolkit includes the template solicitation; then MPOs, ATPs, MnDOT Districts can use that template to solicit applications; the applicants provide their project readiness summary, that is maybe one to two paragraphs, their cost effectiveness of greenhouse gas emissions reduction using our tool, and then give a brief narrative responses to four co-benefit questions, and then the Selection Committee would score the applications and rank the project based on the cost effectiveness of their greenhouse gas emission, score their co-benefit areas based on that five point rubric, and then get a total score for each of the applications to select their preferred project for funding from the DOT.

Simons commented that in terms of moving this toolkit to finalization, right now they are sharing the draft contents of the toolkit with their stakeholders, and they are asking for feedback so if you have heard anything here that you think isn't going to work for the MPO, in terms of guidance, or if you think there is something missing, she would be really interested in hearing about that today, and then they will incorporate that feedback and share the final toolkit in early February so that our partners can get started with solicitation for, at a minimum FY2025 and FY2026 CRP projects, FY2027 is sort of a bonus year if entities are interested in soliciting for that year. She said that that is their plan for moving from draft to final toolkit, so with that she will pause and see what feedback this group might have, if you have any recommended changes or if you think anything is missing from the toolkit or if you have anything else that you would like to share with her.

Ellis commented that this is a lot of work for the amount of money they receive each year so it would be nice if we could maybe combine funds, like one single application for three or four years rather than trying to figure out how to spend this money every year for \$20,000; it is rather difficult so do you have any ideas on that, does MnDOT. Simons responded that she thinks that is a really fair concern, you are completely right, now we are talking about federalizing your project and we are talking about \$20,000 to \$30,000 dollars; it is challenging. She said that she knows there was some discussion between Jon Mason and representatives from the MPO, she isn't sure who all was involved, but her understanding is that there was a proposal to combine funds from some of the years so the MPO would have \$90,000 for FY2025, and Jon is here so she will let him talk about the details of that proposal. Emery stated that he was involved in that discussion as was Stephanie Halford, Jon Mason, and Brian Ketring, with the District, and what we were requesting was, we did have some funds left over from 2023, and then we are using our 2024 allocation for this project, but then we are also requesting that we be able to utilize the 2025 and 2026 allocations, which, as you mentioned would come to about \$95,000 in funds. He said that they hope to work through that process because, as Nancy said, with the federal money you have to jump through all the same hoops and loops and everything else that you would if were a million-dollar project, and that is a lot of work for a small amount. He added that, again, as Nancy said, even if a guy could, for future, if you could combine multiple years of allocations into one application that would be better.

Mason stated that what he could help out with would be to set up a follow-up meeting with the same group, and maybe Nancy would like to be a part of it as well, and Siri, and kind of revisit a potential option that involves sort of a trade between the ATP and the MPO, sort of like a payback situation, it does involve the ATP and there are a couple of meetings in February so it would be good if we can all get on the same page with a proposal and then bring that to the ATP and then probably to the MPO process as well, but they have an idea they would like to run by you guys that seems to fit what you are requesting. Ellis commented that it seems to her that it could be done, something similar to like the City Sub-Target dollars, where you combine them and then we know which year we are applying for a four-year project in, if we could do something similar to that, because if we received our City Sub-Target dollars every year, again, to try to find a project to fit that small amount it is just a lot of work so it would be easier if we, as an ATP, figure out a way since we only have one MPO, to combine it into a single T.I.P., like a four year type scenario. Emery said that they would be interested in having another sit-down, having another Teams call or whatever and working out all those details, so if there is something that has to go through the ATP or whatever in February that would be good, at least we are all on the same page, and he thinks that based on their last discussion, as the solicitation for the FY2025 and FY2026 funds is going to come out in February, at least that is his understanding and what they are hoping, and he thinks Stephanie is hoping to have that on the agenda for February.

Simons said that she can say, from her perspective, they are planning to share the draft toolkit in early February so she believes that will fit with the timing with this group.

Mason stated that he will work, sooner than later, to get that call together and get on the same page and talk about logistics, ultimately it is up to the MPO how the funding is used, but this situation does kind of involve using ATP funds and then paying it back over the years, so it is a little bit of a nuance that is involved, multiple years. Emery said that if Jon could reach out to the appropriate parties and try to get something lined up, he would appreciate it. Mason stated that he would do that.

Simons said that she would just like to say that she understands the frustration with small project amounts, her team is also responsible for the delivery of the federal projects with the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program and they have encountered some similar challenges working with really small projects and federalizing them and so she is hopeful that they will get to a solution that feels more manageable than picking a \$20,000 project each year; she is looking forward to additional conversations with some of you.

Information only.

OTHER BUSINESS

a. 2024/2025 Unified Work Program Project Update – Halford stated that the last page is our summary of where we are at with our work program. She pointed out that there are a couple of carry-over items.

Halford stated that we are just buttoning up the Street and Highway Plan, which we gave final approval to last month. She said that the final document is being put together and then we have the signed documents, hopefully we will have the final draft in the next day or two and then we will submit it to our Federal and DOT Partners.

Halford said that the ITS Architecture will be starting this month, so that is at ground zero and we plan to have it completed in the fall.

Halford stated that the Land Use Plan Updates aren't scheduled to begin until 2025 and 2026.

Halford said that we are looking at starting the Micro-Transit study in 2025, but there are a few things that might get moved around so it may be moved up later this year.

Halford stated that unfortunately we didn't receive any proposals for the Grand Valley Study. She explained that the RFP went out but no proposals were submitted by the deadline, nor after it either, so we are going to have some conversations with some key parties on that to see if we want to go forward with it or not.

Halford said that we received three proposals for the Safe Street For All project, so we will be interviewing all three firms. She added that as of now the Selection Committee did receive copies of the documents to do a pre-review and then we will be doing the interviews at the end of January.

Halford stated that we are also currently working on a draft Bikeway Map, which is something we do at the beginning of each year, and once the draft is reviewed and any required changes are made it will go to print.

Kuharenko said he has a question on the Grand Valley Study. He stated that he thinks he saw that there may have been a timing issue with it, could you give us a little bit more detail as to why it wouldn't have received any proposal, was it maybe because the Grand Valley RFP went out at the same time as the Safe Streets For All RFP. Halford responded that there were a couple of firms that reached out, and she reached out to another firm that she thought would apply for the Grand Valley Study to see if she could get some insight as to why they didn't submit a proposal, and what she was told was that a lot of firms were putting all their eggs in the Safe Streets For All project, it was a little bit bigger pot, and they were just kind of concerned about staff availability with going after both studies, that was really just kind of the feedback she got. She said that only really one firm said that if you give it a couple of months they would be interested, but there is no guarantee that that will actually happen, but that is the feedback she got.

Kuharenko stated that he appreciates the information, and he thinks that the only other question or comment that he has is, we've got the Land Use Plan, we are looking at the 2055 MTP, one of the things he probably would like to see is just a schedule of the layout of what we are looking at

for all the different elements of the MTP as we move towards the 2055, with the wrap up of the 2050, so if you could put together a timeline or schedule with all the different pieces that would be great. Halford responded that they will be working on that and added that there will be a couple of pre-conversations we might want to have to discuss maybe approaching the MTP a little bit differently this time around.

- b. February Technical Advisory Committee Agenda Items Halford reported that she just wants to give a heads up on what we are seeing for our February agenda. She said that we already hit on most of them, such as the carbon solicitation/application, and we already have an idea of the project that the City of East Grand Forks is looking at; we know there will be some T.I.P. amendments; and we will probably be having a discussion on Functional Classification as we got our urban area approved; and there might be some work program amendments in February or March.
- c. Agency Updates None.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED BY ELLIS, SECONDED BY KUHARENKO, TO ADJOURN THE JANUARY 10TH, 2024 MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT 2:14 P.M.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis, Office Manager