

Committee Report

Transportation Committee



Committee meeting date: August 24, 2026

For the Metropolitan Council: September 9, 2026

Business Item: 2026-127

2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Proposed action

That the Metropolitan Council:

- Adopt the attached 2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), with a budget of approximately \$11.9 million, including approximately \$6.0 million in federal funds
- Authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute an agreement with the Minnesota Department of Transportation for receipt of Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration planning funds.

Summary of Transportation Committee discussion/questions

Manager of Multimodal Transportation Planning Frank Alarcon presented this item. Alarcon explained that the UPWP outlines transportation planning work that is supported with federal funding, and the Regional Transportation Planning Work Program focuses on work that is fully funded with regional sources. Carter, Tyronne asked how the approximately \$6 million in federal funds compares to what was received in prior years. Alarcon stated that it is similar to last year's grant amount, which was approximately \$5.9 million. Transportation Planning Director Amy Vennewitz added that the Council receives the federal funds through MnDOT, which receives the money from the federal government and distributes it among the eight Minnesota MPOs.

Motion by Carter, Toni, seconded by Obisakin. Motion carried, consent to Council.

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2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

District(s), member(s):	All
Policy/legal reference:	Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA); FM 15-1 Income/Grants Policy
Staff prepared/presented:	Amy Vennewitz, Director of Transportation Planning, 651-602-1058 Cole Hiniker, Senior Manager of Multimodal Planning, 651-602-1748 Frank Alarcon, Manager of Multimodal Planning, 651-602-1979
Division/department:	Transportation Planning

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Background

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) serves as the Met Council's application for U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) transportation planning funds. Federal regulations require that every metropolitan planning organization (MPO) develop and submit a UPWP to the USDOT in order to receive these funds. The UPWP is prepared annually and describes the transportation planning activities that the Met Council will perform for the coming year.

The UPWP includes activities required by federal regulation that address planning priorities of the metropolitan area. The document identifies budgeted expenditures, funding sources, and the allocation of staff resources for the MPO's transportation planning activities. Activities and projects with Met Council participation include staff hours and consultant costs that detail how the estimated \$6.0 million of federal planning money will be spent, along with a required minimum 20 percent local match to the federal funds. In 2027, the Met Council will continue initiating items identified in the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan Work Program.

Many of the tasks described in the UPWP are ongoing required activities for an MPO. Examples of these activities include staff support of the TAB/TAC committee process, the annual preparation of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and support of the Regional Solicitation. Other tasks are focused planning studies that help to move forward the region's transportation policies and knowledge, identify regional investments, and fulfill the transportation objectives outlined in the

2050 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). The 2027 UPWP includes approximately \$2.0 million in planned consulting costs to complete these planning studies.

In addition, there are transportation planning activities that are fully regionally funded. These planning activities are described separately in the Regional Transportation Planning Work Program. The activities in the Regional Work Program are either not eligible for federal planning funds or are funded through available local sources, and in some instances are activities required under state law, such as the Right-of-Way Acquisition Loan Fund (RALF) and aviation planning activities. The Regional Transportation Planning Work Program is included to provide a more holistic picture of the transportation planning activities that will occur in the region.

Participants in the development of the UPWP and Regional Work Program include the Met Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Metropolitan Airports Commission, regional transit providers, cities, counties, and other stakeholders. The draft 2027 UPWP and Regional Transportation Planning Work Program were available for public review and comment from Friday, June 12, 2026, through 5:00 p.m. on July 17, 2026. One member of the public submitted seven comments. Those comments, and staff responses, are included below in Table 1.

Rationale

The UPWP is a federally required description and documentation of proposed transportation and transportation-related planning activities in the metropolitan area. The activities include both activities required for the MPO to operate as well as projects that reflect the values, vision, goals, objectives, policies, and actions of Imagine 2050 and the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan.

The Metropolitan Council may enter into agreements with other governments and organizations which provide income/grants to the Council which are consistent with the Council's mission and priorities. Policy FM 15-1 requires Council approval for grants exceeding \$2,000,000.

Thrive lens analysis

On February 12, 2025, the Council adopted Imagine 2050, which builds on policy direction in Thrive MSP 2040. The 2027 UPWP supports the goals within Imagine 2050 with work tasks and major products associated with each goal, as identified in the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan.

Funding

The proposed planning work is funded with approximately \$6.0 million in federal transportation planning grant funds distributed through MnDOT and \$1.2 million in required local match plus \$4.7 million in local over-match using budgeted Council funds.

Small business inclusion

There are no direct impacts to small businesses with the proposed action. When receiving Federal Funds from MnDOT, their DBE program requirements will be applicable.



Table 1: 2027 UPWP Comments and Responses

Commenter	Topic	Comment	Response
Ali Kress	Parking; traffic; transit	I would like to comment on the trends I see in Minneapolis that are keeping small businesses from thriving, creating traffic nightmares, and keeping it difficult for people who use local transportation within the twin cities proper. 1. I have lived near Lake Street since 2020, and despite covid, the changes to Lake Street (taking away lanes) are keeping businesses from having customers park and access their locations. It definitely increased traffic on my street. This trend seems to be in multiple locations, notably uptown, the point where I do not even drive there anymore because the traffic is so bad. Uptown is also a place where storefronts are still not coming back. Not only is this bad for local businesses, but the idea that more people will use our antiquated and not terribly reliable bus service instead of driving in the winter is just insane, especially in a neighborhood where most people are older.	Thank you for your comment. The UPWP is a description of regional transportation and transportation-related planning activities in the Twin Cities metropolitan area for calendar year 2027. The UPWP generally does not address issues specific to a single community. We will share your comment about Uptown/Lake Street with staff at relevant local agencies.
Ali Kress	Bicycle lanes	2. Dedicated bike lanes are great for 3-4 months out of the year for people who are young enough to ride everywhere. They are a waste of space in a place that is icy most of the time, and more and more streets are being made smaller with more bike lanes and no where to put the snow.	Thank you for your comment. The Met Council's 2050 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) supports implementation of safe, convenient bicycle infrastructure throughout the region to improve safety, health, and equity and provide more transportation options. Providing transportation options is part of building an equitable region for all types of transportation users. You can read the TPP here: https://imagine2050.metrocouncil.org/read-the-plans/transportation/ The decision of where and how to provide infrastructure for dedicated bike lanes or similar infrastructure is a local decision for cities and counties. We will share your comment about dedicated bike lanes with staff at relevant local agencies.

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Ali Kress	Snow removal; parking	3. The snow removal for these new one-lane roads is a nightmare and makes parking even more difficult.	Thank you for your comment. Winter maintenance of all transportation infrastructure is important and required by the Met Council for all regionally funded projects and is the responsibility of the public agencies at the city, county, and state levels that own and operate our region's roadways. We will share your feedback with staff at those agencies.
Ali Kress	Intersection design	4. The pop up "pretend traffic circles" that are being put up everywhere where there is not enough room for a real traffic circle just make it dangerous and confusing if you have three cars at once trying to figure out what to do. They are also beyond ugly. If you are going to put in traffic circles, do it the right way where there is enough room. They don't slow people down, they make them more angry and drive faster.	Thank you for your comment. The Met Council's 2050 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) encourages roadway jurisdictions to implement roadway designs that reduce severe injuries and deaths caused by crashes. Roundabouts and traffic circles can reduce severe injuries and deaths by lowering speeds and reducing conflict points, consistent with a Safe Systems approach. You can read more about Safe Systems and roadway safety in the 2050 TPP here: https://imagine2050.metrocouncil.org/read-the-plans/transportation/
Ali Kress	Curb extensions	5. In numerous places I see the sidewalks are enlarged so that they stick out into the street and cars keep running over them. This is fairly dangerous, especially if you are drive somewhere all the time and suddenly the corner is cut off or a lane is cut off.	Thank you for your comment. The Met Council's 2050 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) encourages roadway jurisdictions to implement roadway designs that improve pedestrian safety. Curb extensions, also known as "bump outs," can improve pedestrian safety by reducing vehicle turning speeds, increasing pedestrian visibility, and reducing the distance to cross the street. These are consistent with the Safe Systems approach to roadway safety. You can read more about this in the 2050 TPP here: https://imagine2050.metrocouncil.org/read-the-plans/transportation/



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Ali Kress	Transit	6. And this is the most important one - I first moved here in 1991 and at that time to get from one place in Mpls to another place in Mpls by bus would take an hour if you had to transfer. That has not changed. I say this as someone who until recently rode the bus for work and then quit riding the bus and took the train and walked 12 blocks because it was faster than trying to wait for a bus that never comes. This does not happen out east, and there is no reason we cannot have public transportation that runs in grids with transfers that make the most sense. If you are going to bother doing anything to help transportation, make it easier for the people who live in the city to get to other parts of the city.	Thank you for your comment. It has been shared with staff at Metro Transit. Please note that Metro Transit is in the process of implementing Network Now, which will expand transit service by more than 40%. You can read Network Now here: https://www.metrotransit.org/network-now. As improvements from Network Now are implemented and METRO projects are completed, more benefits of an interconnected network of frequent transit routes will be realized. See the future METRO system map available here: https://www.metrotransit.org/metro-network
Ali Kress	Public involvement	Word on the street is more people who generate the tax revenue are wanting to leave Minneapolis and that feeling is growing. Start making practical common-sense decisions before it is too late. I would wager the city planners you have are not single moms who have to drive kids to daycare on the way to work, people who own small businesses in Minneapolis, or people who have to use public transit because they have no cars. Before you make decisions, talk to the people that live here.	Thank you for your comment. Policy 4, "Shared Decision-Making," of the Met Council's Transportation Policy Plan encourages transportation agencies to conduct engagement activities and implement shared decision making with historically underrepresented communities throughout policy making, planning, and project development to ensure equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of transportation investments. Most of the transportation planning activities described in the draft 2027 UPWP include public engagement to inform the final results. The Community Assessment & Engagement Guide, described on page 41, will provide guidance on identifying and defining community, methods for mapping community assets and context, methods for engaging with communities about their transportation needs, and integrating those findings into a project's purpose and need, planning, development, and decision-making.