

Committee Report

Transportation Committee



Committee meeting date: August 24, 2026

For the Metropolitan Council: September 9, 2026

Business Item: 2026-128

Extended Urbanized Area Memorandum of Understanding

Proposed action

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the updated Memorandum of Understanding with the urbanized area of Wright and Sherburne Counties, its applicable cities, and the Region 7W Policy Board.

Summary of Transportation Committee discussion/questions

Transportation Planning Analyst Dave Burns presented this item. Johnson asked for clarification on how projects are being handled and if the extended area receives money from the Council. Burns stated this is just an MOU that outlines the relationship between the extended area staff and the staff in the MPO and there are no implications on funding. Transportation Planning Director Amy Vennewitz added that federal competitive grants require a letter of support from the MPO; in an instance of an extended area community seeking federal funding, their staff would come to Metropolitan Council staff for a letter of support.

Motion by Barber, seconded by Johnson. Motion carried, consent to Council.

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District(s), member(s): All
Policy/legal reference: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)
Staff prepared/presented: David Burns, Planning Analyst 651-602-1887
Division/department: Transportation Planning

Proposed action

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the updated Memorandum of Understanding with the urbanized area of Wright and Sherburne Counties, its applicable cities, and the Region 7W Policy Board.

Background

The Metropolitan Council serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Twin Cities and the surrounding urbanized area. By federal law, an MPO must include the contiguous urbanized area in its transportation planning process. After each census, the U.S. Census Bureau identifies the contiguous urbanized portions of metropolitan areas. The urbanized area first extended into Wright and Sherburne counties after the 2010 Census, after which the Council and the newly identified urbanized area entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish an agreement on how to cooperatively conduct transportation planning and programming in this area. The MOU was approved by the Council in January of 2014.

The 2020 Census identified minor changes to the urbanized areas of Wright and Sherburne Counties. There were no changes to the specific cities included in the extended urbanized area, namely Albertville, Elk River, Hanover, Otsego, and St. Michael. Council staff coordinated and met with representatives from the Extended Urbanized Area throughout 2023 and 2024 to discuss the existing MOU and decided if any changes to the agreement were desired. The resulting updated Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by all the cities and counties of the Extended Urbanized Area as well as the 7W policy board.

The revised MOU features several minor changes, including:

- Updated language to reflect the region's air quality attainment status and Transportation Policy Plan update cycle;
- Revised meeting frequency and included staff;
- Clarification on coordination efforts for planning studies.

No changes to transportation programming processes were made. The Extended Urbanized Area will continue to participate in the Central Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) for federal transportation funding.

Rationale

A revised MOU between the Council and the Extended Urbanized Area is necessary to comply with federal law and regulations.

Thrive lens analysis

On Feb. 12, 2025, the Council adopted Imagine 2050, which builds on policy direction in Thrive MSP 2040. Under the Thrive lens, the updated MOU most directly affects the Stewardship and Prosperity outcomes, as it helps to ensure the careful management of regional infrastructure and investments and assists in building a regional economy.

Funding

The Council, as the MPO for the region, must comply with federal law in order to receive US DOT federal planning funds.

Small business inclusion

Information in this section must be completed by the Office of Equity and Equal Opportunity.

