



POLICYMAKER WORKING GROUP REGIONAL SOLICITATION

November 19, 2025

Working Group Attendees:

James Hovland; Deb Barber; Glen Johnson; Peter Dugan; Mary Liz Holberg; Brian Martinson; Victor Lake; Toni Carter; Anjuli Cameron; Jon Ulrich; Julie Jeppson; Sheila Kauppi; Kevin Anderson

Other Attendees:

Steve Peterson, Elaine Koutsoukos, Charles Carlson, Joe Barbeau, Cole Hiniker, Joe Widing, Wendy Duren, Bethany Brandt-Sargent, Heidi Schallberg, Amy Vennewitz, Robbie King, Dave Burns (Met Council); Molly Stewart, Lydia Statz (SRF Consulting Group); Lyssa Leitner (Washington County); Molly McCartney, Aaron Tag (MnDOT); Carla Stueve (Hennepin County); Paul Oehme (City of Lakeville), Joe MacPherson (Anoka County); Allison Bell (Bellwether Consulting)

10:00 AM – 11:45 AM

390 Robert St N St Paul, MN 55101; Conference Room 1A

ABRT Funding

The discussion began with the Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ABRT) funding approach. The TAC had raised concerns about the absence of a maximum ABRT award and recommended rephrasing the language to indicate a \$30,000,000 target, assuming all transit applications are funded, and other funding categories meet or nearly meet their targets. Member Barber expressed concern that this could lead to funding low-scoring transit projects, which was something the group wanted to avoid. A proposal was made to remove the proposed language from the current draft.

Member Ulrich stated a preference for allocating any extra funding to other categories rather than ABRT. Joe MacPherson noted that while Anoka County does not have an ABRT line, other projects such as Metro Micro could benefit from funding. Member Barber highlighted that the F Line is coming to Anoka County and emphasized the intentional effort to distribute ABRT projects across the region. Overall, the group agreed that the current wording (without the proposed TAC amendment) provides flexibility and clarifies that funding comes from the transit pot.

The group concluded that a motion without the proposed language will be presented to TAB.

Community Considerations

The conversation then shifted to Community Considerations. Allison Bell presented updates, noting that the proposed measures align with the Regional Equity Framework and aim to address challenges such as “grade inflation.” The new version is fully qualitative, eliminating automatic scores based on demographics, and includes support for fairness and consistency. Pilot testing showed that scoring measures were clearer and easier to use, though most projects scored in the medium range and scorers were not always aligned.

Member Ulrich expressed concern about the subjectivity of these measures and questioned their weight in funding decisions, noting that communities and populations change over time. Member Martinson supported the methodology, emphasizing its role in continuous quality improvement and consensus-building, and argued that community needs do not change wholesale every few years.

Member Carter echoed this support and appreciated the effort invested. Member Holberg questioned differences in priorities and who determines benefits versus harms. Member Barber viewed the criteria as an opportunity for suburban and rural communities to demonstrate local knowledge and needs.

Member Johnson asked about lessons from the Anoka County pilot project, and Joe MacPherson explained that a spot mobility project scored medium-low because its needs did not align with typical measures, suggesting different weights for different project types. Member Anderson agreed and suggested incorporating more quantitative data, expressing concern about yes/no questions and advocating for greater emphasis on safety.

The group then discussed a proposed funding priority that would automatically fund any projects that score high on all three community considerations measures. Member Ulrich was opposed and shared an example of a Scott County project that nearly lost funding due to low community engagement scores, prompting Member Barber to note that engagement may not have been accurately reflected in the application. Member Carter was not concerned about overcommitting, while Member Martinson stressed that the intent is to start planning with community input. Member Holberg requested technical committee input and disagreed with the characterization of past project initiation processes. The issue was ultimately referred back to Technical Steering Committee for further review.

Next Steps

The next meeting will allow for further discussion of the community considerations criteria and score weighting across all criteria.

The next Policymaker Working Group meeting is scheduled for December 17.