Release the 2026 Funding Applications

Regional Solicitation, Active Transportation, and Highway Safety Improvement Program

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Policy Working Group, March 2026

Public Engagement: Methods & Stats

GovDelivery Email	• 2,826 opens; 665 clicks
Public Comment Web Page	• 294 visits
Regional Solicitation web page	• 495 visits
Engage web page	• 372 views; 236 visits
Facebook	• 4,219 views; 22 engagements

22

Total Comments

160

Budget Surveys

Metropolitan Council

Issue #1 for Policy Work Group

Limit the number of AT applications an agency can submit for the 3 AT application categories?

With no local match required for Active Transportation (AT), it may increase the number of applications submitted.

Pros to Limiting Submittals

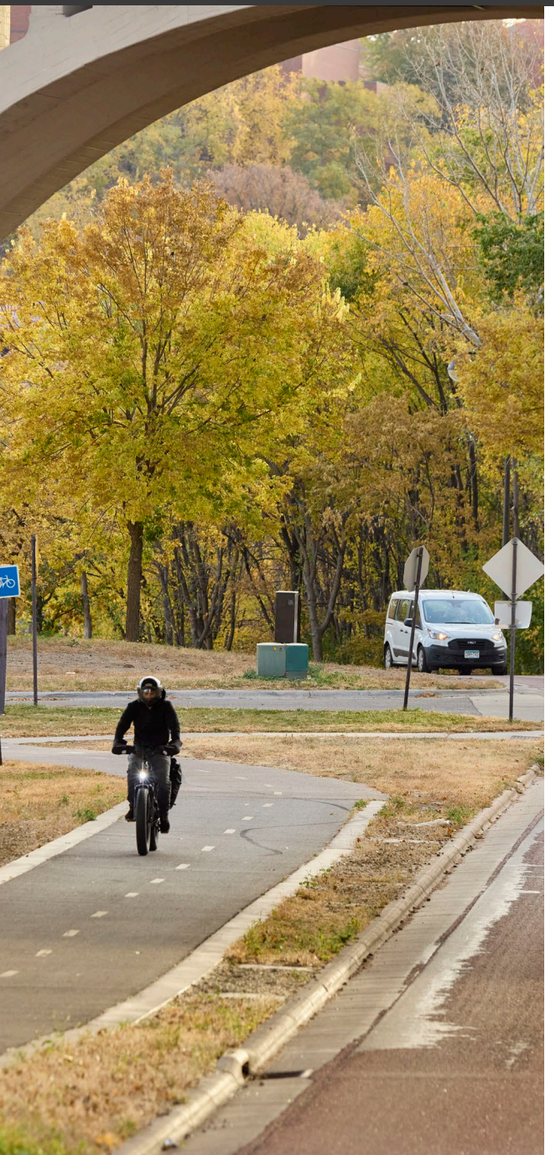
- Gives smaller cities a better opportunity to be funded.
- A high number of applications may be taxing on volunteer scorers and delay the process.
- Forces agencies to prioritize and limit their submittals similar to many USDOT discretionary grant opportunities.
- May help with the geographic balance of the funds across the region.
- There is likely another AT solicitation in 2027, so a near-term second opportunity.

Cons to Limiting Submittals

- May not be enough applications to fund $50M for AT (or may require funding lower scoring projects at the bottom of the ranked list/may not fund the best projects in the region).
- Want to show the total demand for AT projects to the state legislature.
- Agencies may want to submit more applications this cycle since they are not sure how their projects will compete with the new structure/measures.
- Some larger agencies may represent large geographic areas or large populations so they may have many bike/ped needs across a wide geographic area.

In order to limit the number of applications, a motion would need to be made such as:
Institute a new rule for the AT applications limiting an agency in submitting X applications for each AT application category.

AT Application Limit Discussion



TAB Active Transportation Working Group (2/23)

- Concern for smaller applicants being pushed out by larger agencies if a limit is not set.
- Discussed potential timing impacts if overwhelmed by applications with no limit.

Other Technical Groups

- General feedback to limit number of applications to support more spread of projects, to limit potential scoring burden for volunteer scorers and ensure best projects are applied for by applicants.
- Members suggested a limit of 3 to 5 applications per category.

TAC Funding and Programming (2/26)

- General feedback was skeptical of limiting applications per applicant.
- Could discuss geographic balance of investments at the project selection stage.

TAC (3/4)

- Did not want to limit applications to show demand for program.
- The application process and requirements mean that even well staff agencies will not submit overwhelming applications.
- No motion moved to limit applications.

Issue #2 for Policy Work Group

Increase maximum award for Travel Demand Management (TDM)?

Carshare Eligibility/ Max Award

- Multiple comments requested:
  - higher maximum awards in TDM
  - higher TDM investments
- ***Response:***
  - TAC recommended increasing the maximum awards for competitive TDM category from $750,000 to $1 million.

Shared Mobility/ Unique Projects

- 4 comments requested some combination of shared mobility category or bringing back Unique Projects category
- ***Response:***
  - Commit to evaluating structure and scoring before 2028 Regional Solicitation to determine better fit for carshare and bikeshare type projects

Next steps

Next steps:

1. **TAB recommendation** (with any recommended changes in response to public comments) – March 2026
2. **Met Council approval** (with any recommended changes in response to public comments) – April 2026
3. **Community Considerations trainings –** spring
4. **Fluxx software training –** spring
5. **Call for projects** – late spring
6. **Formation of scoring committees** – May and June (Community Considerations scorers being identified now)
7. **Scoring committees meetings** – Summer/Fall
8. **TAB project selection** – Late 2026/early 2027

TAB Recommended Motion

Recommend that the Transportation Advisory Board recommend approval of the release of the 2026 Regional Solicitation, Active Transportation Solicitation, and Highway Safety Improvement (HSIP) Solicitations, including the following changes resulting from the public comment period.

- Change the crash years used in the Regional Solicitation safety applications and HSIP applications from 2020-2024 to 2021-2025.
- Change Active Transportation's Complete Streets scoring criterion to add "Agencies or organizations without roadway ownership or jurisdiction may include the community's local ordinance or policy where the project is located and describe how the project would support advancing complete streets in this community."
- Change the Access to Key Destinations scoring criterion in Active Transportation's Local Bicycle Facilities application and Regional Solicitation's Regional Bicycle Facilities application to add the following language: "Applicants may identify additional destinations up to 1 mile from the project location but will need to demonstrate that these destinations have a continuous bicycle facility connection that provides safe access from the project location. These destinations must be clearly marked outside of the one-half mile buffer."
- Increase the maximum funding award in the Travel Demand Management category from $750,000 to $1,000,000.

Thank You

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Summary of Other Comments Received for Reference

Active Transportation

Complete Streets Criterion

- Comment on complete streets scoring measure and how it applies to entities without roadway authority.
- ***Recommendation to add following language:***
  - Agencies or organizations without roadway ownership or jurisdiction may include the community's local ordinance or policy where the project is located and describe how the project would support advancing complete streets in this community.

Key Destinations Criterion

- Comments on scoring measure, distances for the connection to key destinations criterion in the bicycle categories.
- ***Recommendation to add following language:***
  - Applicants may identify additional destinations up to 1 mile from the project location but will need to demonstrate that these destinations have a continuous bicycle facility connection that provides safe access from the project location. These destinations must be clearly marked outside of the ½ mile buffer.

Active Transportation

Local Match

- Comments were supportive of limiting financial barriers
- ***Recommendation:***
  - No change, maintain no local match
  - Consider year-round maintenance requirements as “soft matches”

Planning Category

- Comments mentioned $200,000 maximum award limited feasibility of regional studies
- ***Recommendation:***
  - Evaluate and reconsider after 2026 cycle.

Other Comments

- AT Working Group requested technical input on the comment asking to limit the # of applications for individual applicants.
- Comment on the planning category eligibility to consider allowing corridor planning.
- Comment on year-round maintenance to be shifted from a qualifying criteria to scoring criteria.
- Comment to consider making other project types eligible for funding.

Active Transportation Con't

Responses to Submitted Comments

Comment on year-round maintenance being shifted from a qualifying criteria to scoring criteria.

- The AT Working Group has discussed this topic considerably and recommended year-round maintenance in the qualifying criteria.
    - The Policymaker Working Group concurred.
- Creating a new scoring criteria would require additional review time with the creation of a new scoring category and the reallocation of scoring. This would delay solicitation release. Consider options for future solicitations after 2026 solicitation.

Comment considering other project types for funding like program type projects such as adult learn to ride or safety training.

- The AT working group identified other project types like programming projects for consideration for future solicitation eligibility.

Comment on the planning category eligibility to consider more than system planning.

- The Working Group discussed this question in previous meetings and recommended to focus planning on system plans for communities without one to help them get ready to build out networks. Consider different planning types for future eligibility.

Community Considerations

Score Weighting

- Support for staying at current measures weighting
- Support for reducing measures weighting
- Request for evaluation of measures upon completion of project selection

Communities

- Support for focus of measures on communities that live, work, play near and adjacent to projects
- One comment requested definition of community that would include commuters and freight passing through

Response:

- Keep at current weighting (15% in safety; 20% for all other categories)
- Maintain current definition of communities
- Commit to review and evaluation of all measures, including Community Considerations, after 2026 Solicitation is complete

Data Considerations

Crash Data

- Request to use 2021-2025 crash data instead of the 2020-2024 crash data shown in the draft applications
- ***Response:***
  - Will make this change to all applications that reference a 5-year crash dataset

Data & Maps

- Multiple comments about data availability/visibility (safety, reliability/ excessive delay, etc.)
- ***Response:***
  - Council staff are working on a data viewer to accompany applications that will consolidate data layers needed to respond

Project Forms

- Comment to simplify project information form
- ***Response:***
  - The changes proposed during the process are not feasible to implement for 2026. Will revisit for 2028.

Other Topics

Program Years

- Comment to have earlier year funds available for transit projects
- ***Response:***
  - There are not currently any early federal funds available. TAB could consider setting aside 2030/2031 funding this cycle for the 2028 cycle.

Bridge Funding Target

- Comment to continue sub-target for Bridges (was previously $10M)
- ***Response:***
  - Dedicated federal MPO bridge funds were discontinued 15 years ago. Evaluate the new Regional Solicitation structure and results after the 2026 cycle to see if a sub-target is warranted.

HSIP

- Comments supporting HSIP Rumble Strip Pilot and recommending other minor edits
- ***Response:***
  - A full evaluation of the pilot program and the larger application will take place following the 2026 cycle.