



Operations and Guidance Manual

For the West Central Area Transportation Partnership

11/1/2023

Contents

I. Introduction	3
A. Purpose	3
B. Background	3
C. Area Transportation Partnerships	4
D. ATP, RDC, and MPO Boundaries	4
II. West Central Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership.....	5
A. General	5
B. Membership.....	5
C. Terms / Appointments.....	5
Mn/DOT Representatives:	5
MPO Representatives:	5
Upper Minnesota Valley RDC Representative:	5
Headwaters RDC Representative:.....	5
County Engineers Representatives:	5
City Engineer Representatives:.....	6
West Central Initiative Regional Planning Organization Representatives:	6
White Earth RTC Representative:	6
Transit Representative:.....	6
Sub-Committees	6
Voting.....	7
D. Roles and Responsibilities	7
E. Attendance.....	7
III. Transportation Investment Process.....	8
A. General	8
B. Transportation Funding & Programs	8
Minnesota GO Vision	9
The Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (MnSMTP)	9
The Minnesota 20-Year State Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP)	9
MnDOT’s 10-Year Capital Highway Investment Proposal (MnCHIP)	9
C. Transportation Investment Goals.....	9
D. Funding Distribution & Programming	10
Highway Safety Improvement Program.....	10
Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) Managed Program	11
Federal Funding	12
E. District, RDC, and MPO Involvement	13
District.....	13
Regional Development Organizations	13
Metropolitan Planning Organization	14
F. Public Participation	14
Website	15
Email Lists.....	15
News releases	16

Public Meetings.....	16
ATIP Outreach	16
Presentations	16
Workshops	16
IV. Management of Area Transportation Improvement Program (ATIP).....	16
A. General.....	16
B. Managing changes to the STIP.....	16
C. Managing Increases and Reductions in Federal Funding	17
D. Linking Projects in the STIP.....	17

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

This Operations and Policy Manual was prepared and adopted by the West Central Minnesota (District 4) Area Transportation Partnership (ATP). The manual provides the ATP an overall framework to develop the Area Transportation Improvement Program (ATIP) – an integrated list of transportation investment priorities that the ATP recommends for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) – and offers guidance for managing the operations of the ATP. The manual clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the different parties associated with the ATP and the ATIP development process. It also contains guidance for administering the projects in the ATIP after they have been included in the STIP and authorized for implementation.

The objectives of this manual are to:

- Provide a background to the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Development Process and the Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs).
- Identify the membership of the ATP and other parties to be involved in the process.
- Define roles and responsibilities of the ATP and other parties involved in the process.
- Establish guidance for project solicitation, ranking, and selection.
- Establish procedures for managing projects programmed in the District 4 elements of the STIP.

The manual provides information about the region’s funding obtained from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Minnesota state trunk highway funding, and Minnesota state aid to local governments. The manual also includes ATP boundaries, ATP regional funding targets, the STIP development schedule, and statewide investment goals and policies.

While the manual attempts to standardize many recurring activities through the establishment of several policies and procedures, there may be instances where the ATP must act independently from the guidance prescribed herein. In these cases, the ATP must operate in a way that is consistent with the intent of the policies contained in the manual and those contained in the State’s STIP guidance. See Chapter 4 for a copy of this guidance.

B. Background

State Transportation Improvement Program and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

The current federal surface transportation bill coupled with the previous bills require each state to produce a State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); a comprehensive four-year schedule of planned transportation projects eligible for federal transportation aid. The STIP is fiscally constrained according to the funding that the ATP can reasonably expect to be available for the life of the document.

The STIP must include capital and most non-capital transportation projects proposed for funding under Title 23 (Highway) and Title 49 (Transit) of the U.S. Code. The STIP must also contain all regionally significant transportation projects requiring an action by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). For informational purposes, the STIP may include all proposed regionally significant projects to be funded with other federal and/or non-federal fund despite jurisdictional sponsor or mode.

C. Area Transportation Partnerships

Minnesota has established a decentralized investment process that relied upon the input and recommendation of eight Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs) throughout the state. The primary role of ATP is to bring together the transportation recommendations of the local units of government, Regional Development Commissions (RDCs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Mn/DOT, and other regional transportation stakeholders into the development of an Area Transportation Improvement Program (ATIP). The ATIP is a prioritized list of regional transportation investments approved by the ATP and submitted for inclusion into the STIP. ATIPs are prepared annually and cover a minimum four-year time frame. Once developed, the draft ATIPs are submitted to the ATPs district engineer for their inclusion into the Draft Statewide Improvement Plan (STIP).

ATP may establish criteria to help in project selection and may develop separate policies and procedures to manage their individual programs and activities.

D. ATP, RDC, and MPO Boundaries

ATP boundaries generally follow Mn/DOT State Aid District boundaries. The geographic area represented by the West Central ATP encompasses a 12-county area: Becker, Big Stone, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Mahnomen, Otter Tail, Pope, Traverse, Stevens, Swift, and Wilkin.

The area represented by this ATP has two active RDCs and one designated MPO. They include the Upper Minnesota Valley RDC which covers Swift and Big Stone counties; the Headwaters RDC which covers Mahnomen County; and the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Planning Organization (Metro COG).

Additionally, the Headwaters RDC serves the White Earth Reservation which includes all of Mahnomen County, plus parts of Becker and Clearwater (located in the Northwest ATP) Counties.

Nine counties in the west central region are not covered by an RDC or MPO; thus, Mn/DOT District 4 has contracted with the West Central Initiative (WCI) to act as a regional planning organization for those counties.

II. West Central Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership

A. General

Increased emphases on planning and public involvement in transportation decision-making are two key provisions under Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The responsibility for transportation planning resides with the RDC, UMRDC, HRDC, FMCOG, and MnDOT District 4 Planning division. The planning processes must appropriately involve special interest, citizens, non-traditional partners, professionals, and regional and local governments. The products derived from these processes become the foundation for project selection within the ATP process. A group that respects these processes can best accomplish priority setting, involving tradeoffs between competing needs within an ATP's programming area.

B. Membership

Fundamental to the ATP's successful operation is the quality of its membership. Persons serving on the ATP must possess broad, multi-modal, and multi-jurisdictional perspectives and sensitivities regarding transportation issues. They should also be interested and involved in the above-described planning processes. According to the statewide guidance, the ATP must include representation from Mn/DOT District 4, the Fargo-Moorhead MPO, RDCs, HRDC, UMRDC and the WCI. View MnDOT's ATP website for the most current list of members.

C. Terms / Appointments

Mn/DOT Representatives:

The District 4 Management Team (DMT) selects three Mn/DOT representatives for terms of two years each. There is no limitation on the number of terms a person may serve the ATP member and terms may be consecutive.

MPO Representatives:

The Fargo-Moorhead council of Governments Policy Board selects a member to serve on the ATP for a term of two years. There is no limitation on the number of terms a person may serve as the ATP member and terms may be consecutive.

Upper Minnesota Valley RDC Representative:

The Upper Minnesota Valley RDC selects a member to serve on the ATP for a term of two years. The voting member is an elected official from either Swift or Big Stone County.

Headwaters RDC Representative:

The Headwaters RDC selects a member to serve on the ATP for a term of two years. There is no limitation on the number of terms a person may serve as the ATP member and terms may be consecutive.

County Engineers Representatives:

Two county engineers are selected by the county engineers' group to serve on the ATP for two-year term each. The terms alternate so that one engineer is replaced each year.

City Engineer Representatives:

The city over 5000 representatives is selected by the city engineers' group to serve for a term of two years. There is no limitation on the number of terms a person may serve; however, terms may not be consecutive.

West Central Initiative Regional Planning Organization Representatives:

The Association of Minnesota Counties selects two county commissioners to serve on the ATP to represent the nine county area covered by the WCI Regional Planning Organization. The two county commissioners cannot be from the same county.

White Earth RTC Representative:

The White Earth RTC selects a member to serve on the ATP for a term of two ears. There is no limitation on the number of terms a person may serve, and terms may be consecutive.

Transit Representative:

The Public Transit Subcommittee selects a representative to serve on the ATP for a term of two years. There is no limitation on the number of terms a person may serve; however, terms may not be consecutive. Chair Appointments: The ATP shall appoint a Chair to preside over meetings and to represent the body at various functions. A simple majority vote of the voting members present shall decide the appointment of the Chair. The Chair's term shall be a period of one year.

The ATP shall also appoint a to preside over meetings of the ATP and the represent the body at various functions in the absence of the designated Chair. The term of service for this appointment shall be one year. After a term of one year, the becomes the chair.

A rotation schedule for the Chair has been established among the members.

Sub-Committees

The ATP may establish various sub-committees to provide support in performing its duties. This includes ranking and recommending projects for discretionary funding made available to the district. For the most part, sub-committees serve in an advisory capacity to the ATP unless otherwise noted. The ATP may form sub-committees on a permanent or temporary basis at its discretion. It may form sub-committees to conduct investment program reviews, to help in project solicitation and selection, or to study particular issues and concerns of the ATP. Currently, there is one standing subcommittee that ranks and recommend projects for Transportation Alternative Program and other funds distributed to the ATP.

Membership composition may vary depending upon the purpose of function of the designated committees. Generally, the ATP should select sub-committee's members from its voting and non-voting membership. In selecting appointments, the ATP must exercise good judgment. It must ensure fair and adequate representation in selecting the size and make up of each sub-

committee. Membership should also be established in a way that contributes toward the development of responsible products for the ATP to consider.

The ATP may authorize external appointments to serve on sub-committees. In these instances, the ATP must ensure that prospective appointees adequately reflect the interest of the groups they are representing, possess expertise in the area to be studied by the sub-committees, or offer some special contribution to the sub-committees which could not have otherwise been obtained from the existing membership on the ATP.

Voting

Each region is authorized one non-voting member who shall be an employee of an active RDC or MPO from within the region unless an employee from one of these agencies has already been appointed to serve as a voting member on the ATP to represent the region. In accordance with the WCI TAC rules, no member of the WCI TAC can serve concurrently as a representative on the ATP.

The voting members on the Partnership play an important role in establishing and approving policies and procedures for the development and management of the ATIP. They attend regular and special meetings of the Partnership and serve on various committees of the Partnership.

Non-voting members also play an important role in assisting the ATP. Despite not having exclusive voting privileges, non-voting members may attend regular meetings of the ATP. Further they may participate in the activities of, and hold membership on, various sub-committees of the ATP. At regular meetings of the ATP, non-voting members shall be identified during roll call and their nameplates shall be distinct from the voting membership to reflect their status.

D. Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the ATP is focused primarily on the development of the draft ATIP. This involves establishing and maintaining a process for soliciting and selecting candidate projects for inclusion in the draft ATIP. It may also involve developing any relevant criteria to aid the ATP in the project selection process.

Another responsibility of the ATP is to manage the ATIP after projects from this document have been included in an approved STIP. The ATP accomplishes this through the development and enactment of various policies and procedures governing such things as changes in project scopes or cost estimates that could result in revisions or amendments to the STIP. The ATP also develops other policies to provide guidance in managing increases or reduction in federal or state funding that has been made targeted to the area for implementing projects in its ATIP.

E. Attendance

The ATP strongly encourages maximum attendance and participation at its meetings. As such, the Chair shall take roll call at the beginning of each meeting. The Chair shall alert the ATP of

members who have two or more absences within a one-year period. The ATP may take appropriate action to encourage attendance. Such actions might include verbal or written notices to the functional group appointing the member.

Voting members unable to attend a meeting may send an alternate member in their absence. Alternate members shall be entitled to vote. If neither the designated nor the alternate members can attend the meeting, the other delegate representative for that functional group (if there is more than one) shall not be entitled to cast a vote for the absent member.

III. Transportation Investment Process

A. General

The ATP employs a decentralized approach in implementing their transportation investment process. It does so by seeking the participation of the area's two active RDCs, the Fargo-Moorhead MPO, the WCI RPO, the county and city engineers, and Mn/DOT planners and engineers.

There are several reasons for decentralizing the ATP's investment decision-making process. First, decentralization assures that projects considered for federal funds reflect regional transportation priorities. This offers a mechanism to ensure that proposed transportation investments adequately address the needs of the regions where the projects are being proposed. Second, the process promotes better cooperation between the different partners involved in setting regional transportation priorities. Third, the process fosters enhanced ownership and accountability back to the citizenry for the projects proposed.

Lastly, the process encourages effective use of existing organizational structures through the involvement of the MPO, RDCs, and WCI. This avoids unnecessary duplication. These regional planning bodies make logical forums for discussing significant transportation matters. Consequently, these bodies can decide how certain issues might impact the development or the quality of life within their respective regions.

B. Transportation Funding & Programs

Transportation funding in Minnesota is primarily derived from federal and state sources. In 1956, Congress passed the Interstate Highway Act of 1956, which created the 41,000-mile federal highway system and framework for future programs. Since then, Minnesota's transportation investment process continues to respond to new federal transportation regulations that require state to maintain a performance-based transportation planning process and demonstrate progress toward meeting those established performance targets through their investments.

The federal legislation we operate largely maintains the program structures and funding from the preceding bills. These bills require states to produce a State Transportation Improvement

Programs (STIP), a comprehensive three-year schedule of planned transportation projects eligible for federal transportation aid.

MnDOT's commitment to performance-based planning is emphasized throughout the organization and is firmly established in its planning process. The planning documents noted below, come together to create MnDOT's Family of Plans, which demonstrate this commitment and illustrate how MnDOT's vision, transportation policies, and capital investment decisions are interrelated and intertwined throughout planning and programming processes.

Minnesota GO Vision

The Minnesota GO Vision articulates a 50-year vision for transportation. This 50-year visioning process helps better align the transportation system with what Minnesotans expect for their quality of life, economy, and natural environment. The MnDOT vision is that Minnesota's multimodal transportation.

The Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (MnSMTP)

The Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan helps translate the Minnesota GO vision into policy direction for all transportation partners in Minnesota. This plan highlights and recommends policies that would guide the state in achieving the 50-year vision in Minnesota GO.

The Minnesota 20-Year State Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP)

The Minnesota 20-year State Highway Investment Plan is paired with the MnSMTP and represent the capital investment priorities for the state highway system over the next 20-years. This document to guides the state in the achieving the 50-year vision in Minnesota GO.

MnDOT's 10-Year Capital Highway Investment Proposal (MnCHIP)

The 10-Year Capital Highway Investment Proposal provides a summary of the department's committed projects for the next four-year, and planned investments for the following six years. The first four years of the MnCHIP are also known as the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan or STIP.

C. Transportation Investment Goals

The state's transportation investment process starts with its 50-year vision for transportation contained in Minnesota GO. The vision is supported by eight principles that are used to guide future policy and investment decisions within MnDOT. MnDOT's 20-year Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan applied Minnesota GO's guiding principles to develop objectives and strategies to inform the development of MnDOT's Statewide Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP) and other statewide plans and studies.

The investment ranges reflected in MN Statewide Transportation Plan are based on historical averages and are to be used as a guide in developing the ATIP. Actual levels of investment may vary from year-to-year depending on competing transportation needs. However, the ATP is responsible for monitoring its investments to ensure consistency over time with these goals.

The investment goals shall only be used as a guide in evaluating the ATP’s investment program. They should not be used in evaluating regional investment programs and projects which the ATP does not include in its ATIP

The ATP may elect to develop its own investment goals, which more closely reflect the transportation needs of the area. If the ATP elects to do so, it should derive these goals from a comprehensive planning process that considers the use of transportation management systems and is characterized by substantial public involvement.

D. Funding Distribution & Programming

MnDOT’s goal of meeting its statewide transportation objectives, as documented in the plans, serves as the foundation for the department’s strategy in distributing funds to the MnDOT District Offices and ATPs. Therefore, MnDOT employs both decentralized and centralized programming processes. Accordingly, MnDOT has structured its present funding distribution methodology around four primary investment programs, which are detailed below. These investment programs have been established to ensure attainment of federal and state transportation goals, while ensuring sufficient investment in other local transportation needs.

As of 2023 the Statewide Performance Program and District Risk Management Programs were eliminated and merged into a single funding target to be distributed to the district. Those funding formula, along with their classifications, factors used to determine their values, description, and weight and in the table below.

Classification	Factor	Description	Weight
System Use	Population	Each district’s share of the total population according to the most recent Census	50%
System Size	Trunk Highway Lane Miles	Each district’s percentage of the statewide total state highway lane miles (including ramps & acceleration lanes).	25%
System Size	Trunk Highway Bridges	Each district’s percentage of the statewide bridge area	20%
System Impact	Heavy Commercial VMT	Each district’s percentage of the statewide total of heavy commercial vehicle miles traveled.	5%

Highway Safety Improvement Program

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is a federally funded safety program. The object of this program is to identify, implement and evaluate cost-effective construction safety projects. This program is administered centrally by the MnDOT Office of Traffic Safety and Technology (OTST). OTST solicits MnDOT Districts and local jurisdictions (e.g., cities and counties) for qualifying safety projects eligible under HSIP. Typically, these include projects that have been identified and recommended in the safety plans prepared by the local agencies and MnDOT and are consistent with the critical emphasis areas and strategies communicated in Minnesota’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan. Activities selected for HSIP funding are generally lower cost, high return on investment strategies designed to reduce the most fatal and serious

types of crashes. Funding to each ATP is determined by its share of serious and fatal crashes on the state and local system.

Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) Managed Program

The ATP managed programs consist of federal funding provided under the STBGP Urban, Small Urban, and Rural population programs within the current federal infrastructure bill. As the name implies, it includes funding from these STBGP program sources that can be used by the ATPs to address local transportation needs qualifying for federal reimbursement in the areas served by the different programs comprising the ATP managed programs. Distribution of funds to the ATPs is accomplished based on the following factors:

ATPs are responsible for project solicitation and selection of projects to be funded under the ATP managed program. These solicitations depend on funds that are available to the ATP under federal and state legislator activity.

Transportation Alternatives

The Transportation Alternatives (TA) program is a set aside from the current Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP). This program has evolved over the years with each new federal transportation bill.

TAP is administered jointly between the MnDOT Central Office and the ATPs as part of a competitive application process. Applicants interested in applying to the TAP must first complete a Letter of Intent (LOI) to determine their eligibility and readiness to apply. ATPs send out full applications to applicants who have completed the LOI, meet the basic eligibility requirements, and successfully demonstrate potential to receive federal TAP funding. ATPs are responsible for evaluating each of the applications they receive and select from those the ones that they wish to recommend for funding.

Applicants within the urbanized boundaries of the Fargo-Moorhead Metro planning area (Moorhead and Dilworth), will apply for TAP funding directly through Metro COG. Solicitation through metro COG may not line up with the district/state solicitation. For the remaining Metro-COG planning area, applicants interested in TAP funding will follow the district/state solicitation.

Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT)

PROTECT funds are federal formula funds made available as a new program through IIJA. The program is intended to invest in projects to make the county's surface transportation system—including highways, public transportation, pedestrian facilities, ports and intercity passenger rail—more resilient to the worsening impact of climate change, while reducing long-term costs by minimizing demands for more expensive repairs and maintenance in the future.

The program prioritizes innovative and collaborative approaches to risk reduction-including holistic approaches to protect against flood, erosion, wave damage and hear impacts. The minimum grant awarded is \$100,000.

Carbon Reduction Program (CRP)

The Carbon Reduction Program is a new program that was created by IJJA to distribute formulation funds for projects that reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions from on-road highway sources. Projects that are eligible include establishing traffic control or monitoring devices, public transportation projects, TA eligible projects, congestion management projects, street light replacement, deploying alternative fuel vehicles and more.

Local Roads and Bridges

Federal local road and bridge funds are distributed to the State Aid eligible counties and cities from the STBGP through the ATP. City and county State Aid entities (counties and cities with a population over 5,000) are eligible to apply for local road and bridge funds to repair and replace eligible roads and bridges on their local systems.

Local Partnership Program

The Local Partnership Program (LPP) was created to provide statewide transportation partnership opportunities with local agencies and construct highway improvements that are mutually beneficial at locations that are not currently programmed on state highways. LPP funds are state funds that are managed by each district's State Aid Engineer. The District State Aid Engineer provides program guidance to eligible applicants and sponsors, oversee project development, schedule coordination, scope and budget management, and communication of project design requirements.

Federal Funding

Regional federal funding targets provided by MnDOT are an important planning tool to assist ATPs in developing their fiscally constrained draft ATIPs. Targets are the maximum amount of funding a District or ATP can receive for a given year. It is important to note that targets may vary throughout the time frame of the STIP and beyond. MnDOT uses different methodological approaches in distributing funding to the ATPs and the MnDOT Districts. The funding amount to each ATP for the four previously identified primary investment programs are each calculated using a different formula and set of criteria.

Each year, MnDOT's Office of Transportation System Management (OTSM and sometimes mentioned in this manual as "Central Office") updates the STIP funding guidance. This guidance contains the estimated federal highway aid and state trunk highway funding available for developing the draft STIP. The funding guidance is broken out by each major investment category with the amounts targeted to each ATP.

ATPs and the MnDOT Districts apply the targeted federal and state funds in the STIP guidance to help them identify the transportation investments to recommend in their fiscally constrained Draft ATIPs. Projects funded with the State Aid funding distributed to counties and municipalities with populations over 5,000 are not required to be included in the STIP unless these funds are needed to match federal transportation funding being requested for projects programmed in the STIP.

E. District, RDC, and MPO Involvement

District

Mn/DOT District 4 is involved in the ATP's affairs in several different capacities. Part of this involvement entails assuring that a process exists to solicit, select, and prioritize projects for inclusion in the ATP's draft ATIP. In this capacity, Mn/DOT District 4 provides staff support to facilitate many activities of the ATP. Some of the duties performed by staff serving in this capacity include (illustrative only):

- Preparing agendas, mailing, and minutes pertaining to ATP meetings.
- Producing and presenting necessary information and materials to assist the ATP in conducting their operations.
- Working with the RDCs, WCI, MPO, ATP, and others, as appropriate, to help in candidate project solicitation and selection associated with ATIP development.
- Participating in (and facilitating if necessary) meetings, as required, to assist the ATP and their sub-committees in performing its duties.

Not only does Mn/DOT District 4 provide support as described above; it also has three voting members on the ATP. The Mn/DOT District 4 Management Team selects the district's representatives and typically selects at least two DMT members to participate to ensure that key decision-makers are at the table. The Assistant District Engineer (ADE), Planning and Programming Division, is appointed to represent local road and bridge projects eligible for state aid. The District Planner or some other third representative is appointed to ensure that the ATP strives to achieve the long-range District goals and objectives as identified through the planning process.

Another role of Mn/DOT District 4 is to manage the region's portion of the STIP. This includes managing revisions to cost estimates; increases, surpluses, and reductions in state or federal funding; and processing amendments or revisions to the STIP for both local and state projects. The ATP has enacted various policies and procedures to assist Mn/DOT District 4 with these activities. Section IV outlines some of these policies and provides additional information on the role of the Mn/DOT District 4 in managing the STIP.

Regional Development Organizations

RDOs include Regional Development Commissions (RDCs) and the West Central Initiative, which serves the counties not covered under an RDC. The RDCs are an integral component of the

ATP's ATIP development process. They provide insight to the ATP concerning the social, economic, and environmental issues facing their regions. This contributes to enhanced transportation decisions and investments. They also serve as a clearinghouse for determining regional transportation priorities. They do this by involving counties, cities, transit, and other interest in their decision-making processes. Use of their transportation advisory committees (TACs) further strengthens the ATP's ATIP development process. These TACs provide an avenue for regional policy makers to provide input into the transportation planning process and thereby assist the ATP in making sound transportation decisions. The TACs will also provide valuable input into developing the regional transportation priorities.

Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Fargo-Moorhead Council of Governments is the only designated MPO in the ATP's programming area. As such, the MPO is responsible for maintaining a continuous, comprehensive, and coordinated transportation planning process for the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area. As the designated MPO, it must also prepare a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at least every two years for the metropolitan area.

Projects in the MPO's metropolitan TIP must be consistent with the products derived from its planning process. Upon approval by the MPO Policy Board and the Governor of Minnesota, the TIP becomes part of the STIP; therefore, the MPO must ensure that the update of its TIP is compatible with the development of the STIP.

The MPO's transportation planning processes are well established and should be useful to the ATP in understanding the transportation priorities for the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area. The candidate projects identified through the MPO's TIP development process provide input into the ATP's ATIP development process. Similar to the RDCs in the area, the MPO is complemented with a Transportation Technical Committee (TTC). This committee assists the agency in reviewing various alternatives to address existing and future transportation needs. Recommendations from this committee are then forwarded to the MPO Policy Board where official action is taken.

As of 2020 the urbanized population of the Fargo-Moorhead MPO grew to at least 200,000 and was designated as a Transportation Management Area. Due to the greater complexity of transportation issues in large urban areas, an MPO in a TMA has a stronger voice in setting priorities for implementation projects in the STIPP are responsible for additional planning documents. IN addition, planning processes in MPOs in TMAs also require certification by the Secretary of the DOT as being in compliance with federal requirements.

F. Public Participation

Federal Surface Transportation Legislation emphasizes strong public participation in the development of transportation plans and programs. ATP-4's decentralized process for developing its draft ATIP helps fulfill the spirit and intent of the legislation. Involving regional planning partners in the development of the Draft ATIP, helps the ATP progress toward its

public involvement goals. Collectively these agencies perform a wide array of programs and services that integrate well and contributes to ATP-4s programming activities. The decision to involve the RDCs and MPO in the ATP's investment decision making process greatly enhances its ability to ensure early and continuous public involvement in developing the draft ATIP. These agencies provide a wide array of programs and services and are highly integrated into the ATP's programming activities.

In delivering these programs and services, considerable opportunities are provided to involve the public. As public agencies, the RDCs and MPO are responsible for making the products, processes, and services to the public. Additionally, the organizational structures of these bodies provide a link to various constituencies within the region they serve. Furthermore, all meetings are open to and accessible to the public. At these meetings, the public is invited to provide input into the activities of these agencies. In turn, the regions consider this input in developing their products and delivering services.

Mn/DOT District 4 uses the processes established by the RDCs and MPO in executing its public participation activities. As previously mentioned, Mn/DOT has contracted with the West Central Initiative to facilitate the public involvement activities in the nine-county area not covered by an RDC. In addition to these activities, Mn/DOT District 4 staff regularly meet and receive input from the public, local governments, and other special interests in the development and execution of its trunk highway construction program.

MnDOT District 4 also uses the processes established by these bodies in executing its public participation activities. In addition, MnDOT District 4 staff regularly meet and receive input from the public, local governments, and other special interests in the development and execution of its trunk highway construction program. MnDOT also uses a robust public involvement process in the development of various agency transportation plans and studies that help inform future investments.

In addition to these public involvement activities, ATP 4 utilizes the additional means to solicit public involvement in their planning processes:

Website

District 4, along with MnDOT's central office maintains the ATP website which hosts meeting notices, agendas, minutes, and supplementary documents. The site also includes ATP membership and information on upcoming solicitations.

Email Lists

The district, along with West Central Initiative, maintains email lists of ATP members, alternate members, committee members, and staff with on-going ATP responsibilities. Email is used to notify members of upcoming meetings, upcoming solicitations, and updates in ATIP development.

Direct mailings may be used if there are any ATP members that do not have email access.

News releases

The district distributes news releases whenever a solicitation is open for application. News releases are also used to notify the public during the development process of the draft and final STIP.

Public Meetings

All ATP meetings along with their minutes and agendas are open and available to the public.

ATIP Outreach

Mn DOT district 4 partners with the regional development commissions (Headwaters, and Upper Minnesota Valley), the West Central Initiative, and the Fargo-Moorhead MPO to coordinate public meetings related to adoption of the ATIP. Once the draft ATIP is ready for public review, these partners coordinate meetings to gather public comments from attendees.

Presentations

MnDOT will make presentations, upon request, available to various entities, including city councils, county commissions, chambers of commerce, service clubs, potential project applicants, businesses, and other civic associations.

Workshops

District 4 may sponsor workshops relating to various projects or program areas. Generally, workshops are intended to inform community members and potential applicants of program criteria, funding availability, or project development.

IV. Management of Area Transportation Improvement Program (ATIP)

A. General

Once the STIP has been approved, the Mn/DOT District 4 Office is responsible for managing the projects that were recommended and included in the document. Since the STIP is a listing of approved projects recommended by the ATPs for programming, the ATP has adopted several policies to assist the district in managing the ATIP. The ATIP is a sub-set of the STIP showing both state and local projects from this region that was included in the STIP.

Mn/DOT District 4 is primarily involved in the day-to-day management of the ATIP. Basically, this involvement can be broken down into two major areas: the management of the district's trunk highway program and the management of the locally sponsored projects in the ATIP. The Mn/DOT District 4's Planning and Programming Section is primarily responsible for managing the trunk highway program, and the Mn/DOT District 4 State Aid Engineer is responsible for managing the local projects in the ATIP.

B. Managing changes to the STIP

While the general overall responsibility for managing the ATIP rests with Mn/DOT District 4, the ATP has approved the use of various policies and criteria for managing changes affecting

projects that have been selected for implementation in the STIP. Possible changes to the ATIP include dealing with revisions to project cost estimates; managing changes in project scope; and managing increases or reductions in federal funding. The level of direct ATP involvement may vary depending on the change that is being requested. Changes that result in the additional/deletion of a project, a major change in project cost, initiation dates, concept or scope will require a formal amendment. Changes that result in minor revisions that include minor changes in project cost, scope or phase initiation dates require an Administrative Modification. Formal Amendments to the STIP require FHWA review and approval while Administrative Modifications can be approved at the state level.

To determine if a project change results in a Administrative Modification or a Formal Amendment refer to the [Minnesota Department of Transportation \(MnDOT\) Procedures for Amendments and Administrative Modifications to the Minnesota State Transportation Improvement Program \(STIP\)](#). Criteria and procedures are different for projects inside and outside the of Metropolitan Planning Organization planning areas.

C. Managing Increases and Reductions in Federal Funding

The STIP is prepared based on an estimate of available federal funding and this estimate can be highly variable over time. Consequently, the ATP's federal funding target, which is an estimate of funding expected to be available for each year of the ATIP, can fluctuate from year-to-year depending on the new revenue forecasts prepared by Mn/DOT. Therefore, the ATP has adopted policies to manage changes in federal funding to ensure that projects in an approved STIP can be implemented.

To manage increases in federal funding, the ATP policy is to advance projects included in the STIP by year and then by priority. Before advancing a project, the ATP must notify the sponsoring agency of the project for appropriate authorization. If projects in the approved STIP cannot be advanced in sufficient numbers to manage the federal funding increase, projects from the Mn/DOT District 4 Ten Year Work Plan will be considered for advancement in the ATIP. Since these projects were not in an approved STIP, an amendment to the STIP would be required before advancement could be authorized.

To manage reductions in federal funding, a policy has been adopted by the ATP relating to the deferment of projects in an approved STIP. The policy is initiated by first asking sponsoring agencies of projects to voluntarily defer their projects. If projects cannot be deferred in sufficient numbers to manage the funding decrease through this voluntary process, the ATP shall be authorized to defer additional projects by priority order to the top of the list of the following year. This process would continue until such time that the ATIP was financially constrained according to the new federal funding estimate.

D. Linking Projects in the STIP

Sometimes one or more jurisdictions may have projects that are programmed in different years of the STIP. However, these projects may be closely tied to each other. In these instances, the

sponsoring agencies may wish to link these projects together so they may be implemented in the same programming year. Justification for linking two or more projects might be financial in nature where the linking of projects would be a more cost-effective alternative than implementing the projects separately. Additionally, linking the projects might allow for improved coordination between two or more jurisdictions. This is the case when the implementation of one of the projects in one year has an impact on another jurisdiction's project programmed in a different year.

The ATP will consider an agency's request to link two or more projects programmed in different years with one another in one program year on a case-by-case basis. However, these projects are required to be in an approved STIP before the ATP shall consider such requests. Sponsoring agencies will be responsible for ensuring that the approvals of these requests do not adversely impact other projects in the STIP without the consent of the agencies that might be affected by such action.