

# Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership Meeting



October 5, 2022 @ 10:00 am  
Hybrid Meeting Format  
(MnDOT- Duluth Conference Room/Zoom)

## SUMMARY

Members in attendance: Kevin Adee, Bryan Anderson, Chris Beldon, Wayne Boucher, Jason DiPiazza, Jim Foldesi, Krysten Foster, Rick Goutermont, Karin Grandia, Steve Hallan, Duane Hill, Andy Hubley, Mark LeBrun, Brian Napstad, JinYeene Neumann, Gary Peterson, Dave Reimer, Penny Simonsen, James Strezihar, Davin Tinquist, Cindy Voigt, John Welle

Guests in attendance: Girma Feyissa, Jason Fisher, James Gittemeier, Russell Habermann, Chris Johnson, Jim Johnson, Scott Johnson, Derek Leuer, Jeff Madill, Paige Melius, Prescott Morrill, Tina Neary, Michelle Pierson, Kacie Stanek, Maren Webb

### 1. Call to Order

Chair Grandia welcomed attendees in person and via Zoom and called the meeting to order at 10:00am. Chair Grandia reiterated directions regarding voting items. Attendance was taken by sign-in sheet for those attending in-person, and by typing names/representation in the chat feature for those attending virtually.

### 2. Approval of Meeting Summary- July 13, 2022

**A motion to approve the July 13, 2022 meeting summary was made by Mark LeBrun / Rick Goutermont. The motion carried.**

### 3. Comments from Citizens Present

No comments were brought forward.

### 4. NEMNATP Operating Guidelines Review and Update (Attachment #1)

Paige Melius directed members and guests to review changes in red in the first attachment which regard hybrid meetings and voting processes. Chair Grandia asked for any questions? Hearing none she asked for a motion.

**A motion to approve the updates to the NEMNATP Operating Guidelines was made by Jim Foldesi/Jason DiPiazza. The motion carried.**

## 5. Presentation 1: ATV State Trail Signage

Kacie Stanek, Area Supervisor for Parks and Trails out of Grand Rapids for Aitkin, Koochiching, Itasca, a little bit of St. Louis Counties, working with grant in aid trails and Chris Johnson, DNR, from Aitkin County kicked off a discussion about ATV/Snowmobile trails, grant-in-aid program, and at-grade crossing of ATV trails.

When an ATV trail crosses a highway, it is heavily scrutinized in the planning stages. The goal is to have crossings happen as infrequently as possible. Need permission from local road authority. 90-degree angles where at grade crossings are needed. It is not common practice to put signs on the highway to alert motorists. The reason is that the highway traffic has the right of way, it is the ATV and Snowmobile requirement to yield.

Conversation also included a discussion of why signs are not used along highways where there are at-grade crossing of ATV/Snowmobile trails. The MnDNR defers all traffic signs to the road authority. The DNR is open to signing intersections if deemed hazardous, however this is not common practice. Chris Johnson also noted that costs of signs has increased and can cost upwards of \$2000.

Brian Napstad noted that the real issue is that ATV users are legally utilizing shoulders on trunk highways to access businesses. He noted the state statute permitting this use is vague but showcases that ATV users may use shoulders for purposes of commerce. He cited examples of trail systems that are just outside of a town or city center. ATV users may use the shoulders to access town amenities including accessing fuel and restaurants. He noted that the conflict or potential conflict is that motorists are often unaware that they may encounter ATV users on the shoulders. He noted that there are not very many miles in Aitkin County that could be impacted, but that having signage alerting motorists could have a safety impact.

After a lengthy discussion that included pros/cons of other such safety signage, it was determined that Bryan Anderson and Duane Hill would check in with MnDOT traffic engineers to determine if such safety signage is in existence, and what might be the most appropriate way to develop alerting signage for roadway authorities to use in these situations.

## 6. 2023 and 2024 Transportation Alternatives, On-System Bridge Funding, and Advanced Construction Projects Review and Update (Attachment #2)

Krysten Saatela Foster recapped items from the July meeting and referred to Attachment #2 regarding new funds added to the 2023-2027 Local Program. To manage influx of new money, advancing existing projects is helpful. Aiding small Cities, and NEMNATP distribution formula, can assist with the process. She also showcased new information regarding the on-system bridge program, based on the bridge inspection program and noted there would be more to come on this in future years.

Additional funding in the 2023 and 2024 formula and Transportation Alternatives program lead to opportunities to award. Some changes in 2023-2024 Transportation Alternatives projects. Cross City Trail in Duluth and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Accessibility Improvements in Duluth. CSAH 55 Shared Use trail in Cloquet/Scanlon, CSAH 61 Trail to Pine City High School, GGST Two Harbors to Flood Bay, the Silver Bay Wayside is being postponed, and a Haines

Road project that was already federalized can absorb some of those funds.

**A motion to approve additional funds for the 2023 and 2024 Transportation Alternatives projects was made by John Welle/Jin Yeane. The motion carried.**

Krysten Saatela Foster next presented information about local Bridge Program. New funding provides Minnesota as a whole an additional \$60-65M annually for bridges. Usually there is a metro/greater Minnesota distribution of 70/30%.

In the interest in on-system projects that are eligible and could be ready, Saatela Foster showcased a 2023 Carlton County (SP 009-606-038 Carlton County CSAH 6 over Elm Creek) and a 2024 Cook County (SP 016-612-076 (Cook County CSAH 12 to replace a structurally deficient culvert with a new bridge). After discussion and some questions about FHWA/MnDOT communications and potential guidance for the 2025-2027 programs, Krysten Foster noted due to these questions, pending FHWA approval, we could just entertain a motion for the 2023 project in Carlton County project, and wait for the 2024 project at the February meeting with more information from FHWA.

We don't have the exact amount of on-system money. Eligible structures that could be ready to go in 2023 Carlton County CSAH 6 Bridge over Elm Creek. For 2024 there is a project to replace Cook County CSAH 12 bridges over Little Devil track River on the Gunflint trail, replaces a structurally deficient project that is already federalized with a new bridge. A Better numbers and more information coming at the February meeting. It was also noted that this funding would be \$570,000 of an already federalized project with a project total of \$2.7million.

**A motion to approve the on-system Carlton County CSAH 6 Bridge over Elm Creek with the understanding that FHWA approves it for 2023 was made by Mark LeBrun/Jim Foldesi. The motion carried.**

Krysten Saatela Foster then updated members about two projects that were prepared to advance construction and discussed the merits of advanced construction. These projects include CSAH 61 in Pine County (SP 058-661-029) which is seeking to move from 2025 to 2024, and CSAH 2 in Aitkin County (SP 001-602-014) which is prepared to advance construct from 2026 to 2025.

**A motion was made to advance Pine County's project from 2025 to 2024, and Aitkin County project from 2026 to 2025 by JinYeene, Cindy Voigt. Motion carries.**

7. IJJA Funding Formula Review and Update (Attachment #3)

Krysten Foster also directed members to recall discussion from the July meeting and called attention to Attachment #3. This focuses on federal funding distribution options. She reviewed the three main options which include:

- Option 1, continue with status quo (60% Rural/40% MPO)
- Option 2, update the formula according to various metrics

- Option 3, Fix the MPO target to a certain dollar figure

Saatela Foster reported back about other districts around the state and how other regions develop their distribution protocol. This included such findings as in District 6 (30% to Rochester), Districts 2, 4, and 7 don't allocate a specific percentage. District 3 has a different formula, more complex which includes lane miles, transit, VMT and population.

JinYeene Neumann proposed looking at census data, a more appropriate distribution would be 77% Rural/ 23%. Neumann acknowledged this would be appropriate after 2026 programming as those projects are already programmed.

A lengthy amicable discussion ensued and many county and MPO area engineers contributed comments. It was noted that the NEMNATP has always sought to have a formula that balances complexity and fairness in pursuit of a simple and fair distribution.

**A motion to change the NEMNATP funding to reflect a 50/50 Needs and Population distribution resulting in a 77% of funds distributed to counties and state-aid cities outside the MPO, and 23% to the MPO, with all current MPO allocations through 2026 being honored, and direction to revisit the funding distribution formula every time there is a federal funding bill is made by JinYeene Neumann/Jason DiPiazza. The motion carried.**

Saatela Foster then focused the discussion on one more aspect of distribution. Starting with 2027 distribution, there will be options that may impact small cities designed to assist and establish federal assistance for small cities affected by MnDOT's Cost Participation Policy. 2027 distribution will happen in November.

Upcoming projects were discussed and potential impacts this could make.

**A motion to approve the 3% or \$250,000, whichever is less, of the local program starting in 2023, excluding ineligible amenities, for existing federal projects for small cities affected by MnDOT's Cost Participation Policy was made by Mark LeBrun/Rick Goutermont. The motion carried.**

#### 8. TA Fall Solicitation Process Update

Paige Melius noted that MnDOT announced the federal Transportation Alternatives program solicitation on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Letters of Intent will be due by November 4, 2022 and applicants will be able to select construction years of 2025, 2026, or 2027. Full applications will be due on January 13, 2023. Melius noted she would email the membership information about the solicitation, and she invited the membership to help spread the word about this funding source.

#### 9. TA Task Force Membership Review and Nominations

Paige Melius reviewed the membership requirements for the ATP's Transportation Alternatives Task Force on Attachment #4. This Task Force is comprised of people from around the region who serve as representatives from a variety of backgrounds. Paige reviewed background of the two nominees Russell Habermann and Molly Thompson. The

list of additional members may be viewed at <https://nemnatp.org/ta/taskforce/> .

**A motion to approve the nominations of Russell Habermann and Molly Thompson to the NEMNATP's TA Task Force was made by Chris Belden/Krysten Saatela Foster. The motion carried.**

#### 10. Presentation 2: Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

Girma Feyissa and Derek Leuer, MnDOT State Aid Traffic Engineers joined via Zoom to present background information and purpose of the HSIP program.

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) became part of law in 2005, as part of SAFETEA-LU to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads, as long as they are data driven projects. The program focuses on low cost, high impact projects. Projects are funded at 90% Federal/ 10% local contribution and projects are subject to federal criteria for contracts. Main focus to reduce fatalities and injuries using data driven projects. Identifying the projects, use targets like risk factors and crash histories. The presenters noted the relationship with Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) programming and statistics and showcased how for a long-time fatalities and injuries had gone down, then plateaued, and have been rising the last two years. They also noted that HSIP program can be part of helping improve outcomes of TZD, especially if more cities can be involved.

Cities have historically not been a big part of TZD or HSIP. To reduce fatalities and injuries, we need to change this. To be HSIP eligible, projects need to derive from the Strategic Highway Safety Plan, they need to be stand-alone safety projects, data driven, low cost (<\$750,000per agency /per project). Projects should be systemic to mitigate risk, and then be able to prioritize projects.

Derek showed a slide with 2023-2026 funded projects and a slide with local HSIP non-eligible project types.

Feyissa described the selection projects. Local agencies submit the projects. 600 HSIP funded projects since 2006, with over 500 in Greater MN.

Feyissa encouraged members to reach out to him if you see projects that could be eligible.

Program has strong requirements to follow data. Ensure crash data is collected and is accurate. Funding needs to connect the known problem to proven solutions. HSIP is still a smaller program. Quick solicitation to get 2023 program out. Current solicitation process is out for 2024-2027, due November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022. Emphasize with MPO areas, work with MPOs and RDCs to get approvals in time. Project cap is \$750,000. Questions, please contact Feyissa or Leuer.

Chair Grandia asked Feyissa to send slides to Paige Melius to be sent out to the membership as a resource.

## 11. MnDOT Updates

Bryan Anderson shared some updates about the MnDOT Transportation Economic Development (TED) program and noted that Koochiching County had submitted a TED program application.

Anderson gave brief mention to the upcoming the Greater Minnesota Stand Alone Noise Barrier Program 2027.

Additionally, Safe Routes to School Planning Assistance applications are due January 11<sup>th</sup>, and he encouraged members to discuss with him or ARDC if they have schools that could benefit from a planning process or a plan update. More information can be found here: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes/planning-grants.html>

Anderson also noted that Safe Routes to School Boost Grants due November 30, 2022, and these \$5,000-\$50,000 grants can be used to implement projects in Safe Routes plans. Learn more here: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes/boost-grants.html>

Anderson also reminded members that the Active Transportation Infrastructure Grant Program has an approaching deadline for letters of intent, due on October 14, 2022. Learn more here: <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/active-transportation-program/infrastructure-grants.html>

Anderson updated membership on the Minnesota Rail Service Improvement program, noting applications are due December 16, 2022. More info here: <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/ofrw/railroad/mrsi.html>

Additionally, the Corridors of Commerce submission is open through November 30<sup>th</sup>. \$250M available. Projects must either develop additional system capacity or demonstrate improvement for freight movement (reduce bottlenecks). ATPs, city, county, township, tribal governments, MPOs, RDCs can apply. More info here: <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/corridorsofcommerce/>

And lastly, Anderson noted that several Corridor/Planning Studies are ongoing or will soon kickoff including: a TH 48 in the Hinckley area in January 2023, a TH 73 corridor study from Cromwell-Kettle River, a TH169 corridor study in Hibbing, and an Aitkin Area Transportation Plan will kick off this fall.

## 12. Member Concerns/ Future Agenda Topics

In the interest of time, Paige Melius will seek any member concerns and ideas for future agenda topics from the membership via email.

Karin Grandia noted her term ends at the end of this meeting. Jason DiPiazza will ascend to chair the NEMNATP in 2023. Grandia noted she would entertain nominations or volunteers for a Vice-Chair or 2023 with the understanding that person will ascend in 2024. Nomination of Robbie Hass from Cook County. Paige Melius noted she would reach to Robbie Hass and confirm if he is willing to serve in this capacity. More information to come on this via email including a voting action item. It was also suggested that a rotational system could be

sought to guide in future years.

For member information, here is the NEMNATP Chair History:

ARDC RTAC Leadership History		
Year	Chair	Vice Chair
FY 2005	Jack Larson (AEOA)	Catherine McLynn (Itasca County)
FY 2006	Catherine McLynn (Itasca County)	Steve Kniefel (St. Louis County Townships)
FY 2007	Steve Kniefel (St. Louis County Townships)	Tom Peterson (MnDNR)
FY 2008	Tom Peterson (MnDNR)	Mike Forsman (St. Louis County)
FY 2009	Mike Forsman (St. Louis County)	Al Goodman (Lake County)
FY 2010	Al Goodman (Lake County)	Steve Kniefel (St. Louis County Townships)
FY 2011	Steve Kniefel (St. Louis County Townships)	Paul Bergman (Lake County)
FY 2012	Paul Bergman (Lake County)	John Welle (Aitkin County)
FY 2013	John Welle (Aitkin County)	Mark LeBrun (Pine County)
ARDC RTAC Revises Function to Include ATP Business, including sharing officers		
Year	Chair	Vice Chair
FY 2014	Mark LeBrun (Pine County)	Cindy Voigt (City of Duluth)
FY 2015	Cindy Voigt (City of Duluth)	Krysten Foster (Lake County)
FY 2016	Krysten Foster (Lake County)	Mike Tardy (Carlton County)
FY 2017	Krysten Foster (Lake County)	Bill Bennett (Duluth Chamber)
FY 2018	Bill Bennett (Duluth Chamber)	JinYeene Neumann (Carlton County)
ARDC RTAC and MnDOT ATP Officially Merge, Changed from Federal Fiscal Year to Calendar Year in 2019		
CY 2019	JinYeene Neumann (Carlton County)	Jason Hollinday (Fond du Lac)
CY 2020	Jason Hollinday (Fond du Lac)	Duane Hill (MnDOT D-1)
CY 2021	Duane Hill (MnDOT D-1)	Karin Grandia (Itasca County)
CY 2022	Karin Grandia (Itasca County)	Jason DiPiazza (Lake County)

### 13. Adjourn

**A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Duane Hill/ JinYeene Neumann at 12:15pm. The motion carried.**

**Bold print denoted action items.**

The next meeting of the NEMNATP will be held on Wednesday, February 8, 2023.