

MnDOT Approach to Corridors of Commerce #4

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Background

- MnDOT was working with the legislature to make some needed adjustments in the Corridors of Commerce law.
- These adjustments were intended to do the following;
 1. Reduce the number of projects that MnDOT needed to define, evaluate, estimate, and score (173 projects last time).
 2. Better define the “regional balance” statement in-law.

Background



- No legislative action occurred regarding COC during the 2022 Session.
- In addition, the 2021 Legislative Session passed a law requiring a new project selection process to begin on August 1, 2022

Background

- MnDOT has re-examined the existing statute language to try to make some tweaks for the 2022-2023 Project Selection process.
- It is MnDOT's hope that these minor changes will;
 - Help minimize the number of project recommendations MnDOT must take through the complete scoring process.
 - Encourage project recommendation submittals that are better thought through and developed.
 - Implement the required new eighth scoring criteria, "project deliverability".

Change #1: Who Can Recommend a Project

- In the 2018 Corridors of Commerce, MnDOT allowed any person, business, or organization to submit a project recommendation.
- For 2022, MnDOT is going to limit who can recommend a project for consideration to a designated submitter from the following agencies or organizations:
 - An area transportation partnership
 - Any city, county, or township in Minnesota
 - Any tribal government in Minnesota
 - Any formal corridor coalition from within the State (formal meaning they are established as a not-for-profit organization)
 - Any metropolitan planning organization or regional development organization.

Change #2: Limit Each Recommender to One Project

- In 2018, project submitters could submit multiple project recommendations.
- For 2022, each eligible entity will only be allowed to submit one project recommendation.
- This will require all submitting entities to select/prioritize the project they wish to submit. To ensure the person submitting is representing the eligible entity, MnDOT may request to see a resolution or letter authorizing the submission from the eligible entity.
- To allow time for the submitters to consider potential projects and prioritize, the project recommendation window will be open for four months.

Change #3: Project Submittal Requirements

- To improve the quality of the project recommendations over those in 2018, MnDOT is proposing the recommenders provide the following information:
 1. Name and contact info of recommender and who they represent.
 2. Location of the project.
 3. Detailed description about what they are recommending.
 4. A cost estimate for construction in FY 2022 dollars that has been reviewed and agreed to by a licensed professional engineer.
 5. Name and contact info of licensed professional engineer.
 6. The amount, source, and contact info for other funding committed to the project recommendation.

Change #4: Project Deliverability

- In 2021, the legislature added an eighth scoring criteria on project deliverability.
- For the 2022 scoring process, MnDOT will utilize the following simple matrix for project deliverability;

Description	Points
Projects with environmental review process complete	100
Projects with environmental review process started, but not complete	50
Projects that have not started any environmental review	0

Regional Balance

- Regional Balance is not defined in the law.
- Regional balance was a particularly divisive issue during the 2018 Project Selection process.
- MnDOT chose to use a soft 50-50 split last time between the 8 counties of its Metro District (Metro) and the other counties in the State (Greater Minnesota)
- When the projects were announced, several legislators were very upset that the projects identified as “Greater Minnesota” were in their view still very metro.

Regional Balance Issue

- During the 2022 Legislative session, MnDOT worked extensively with several legislators to try to develop a more agreed to approach to Regional Balance and get that put into law.
- Unfortunately, there was no legislative action on the program.
- MnDOT will work with the 2023 Legislature to try to resolve this issue early in the session, before MnDOT plans to announce project awards on May 1.
- If there are no legislation changes again, MnDOT will have to decide what approach to use before it announces the next round of project awards.

Available Funding

- 2021 Legislature provided \$200 M in bonds for the program.
- MnDOT assuming the \$25 M / Year Trunk Highway cash transfer will continue another two years minimally.
- Total program level for CoC #4 is about \$250 M.

2022-2023 Project Selection Timeline

Key Activity	Schedule
Announce 2022 project recommendation process and Open project recommendation on-line submittal process.	August 1, 2022
Close project recommendation on-line submittal process	November 30, 2022
Begin project reviews by districts.	December 1, 2022
Final project descriptions and cost estimates are due to central office from districts.	March 1, 2023
Letters of support for the project are due to central office.	March 1, 2023
Consultant begins evaluation and scoring of projects.	March 1, 2023
MnDOT announces project awards.	May 1, 2023

August 1st Launch Date

- MnDOT was required by the 2021 legislation to begin the next CoC cycle by August 1, 2022.
- MnDOT did successfully launch the on-line project recommendation on-time.
- The project recommendation window will be open until the close of business on November 30, 2022.

Questions Asked to Date

1. Will a MnDOT cost estimate from a study or environmental document suffice for engineer's estimate for the project recommendation? Answer: Yes.
2. Can two cities, two counties, and a corridor coalition submit different project recommendations for the same area of roadway? Answer: Yes, one each for a total of five.
3. Are projects on the local system eligible for CoC funding? Answer: No.
4. Are projects identified on MnDOT's supplemental freight corridors eligible for the program? Answer: Yes (MnDOT adopted them into the IRC system before 2018.)

Questions Asked to Date

5. What is necessary for a project to be considered having the “environmental process started”? Answer: Districts/Operations will make that call.

6. Will MnDOT be submitting any projects? Answer: No

7. Can projects in the STIP receive CoC funding? Answer: Only if the project is listed in the STIP because it is already receiving CoC funding.

Corridors of Commerce Website

For additional information or to submit a project recommendation, please visit MnDOT's on-line website at;

www.dot.state.mn.us/corridorsofcommerce/

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