

SAINT CLOUD AREA PLANNING ORGANIZATION POLICY BOARD
Thursday, June 8, 2023 – 4:30 p.m.

A regular meeting of the Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization Policy Board was held on Thursday, June 8, at 4:30 p.m. APO Chair Raeanne Danielowski presided with the following members:

Ryan Daniel	Metro Bus
Dave Kleis	City of Saint Cloud
Jake Anderson	City of Saint Cloud
Jeff Westerlund	LeSauk Township
Tim Elness	City of Sartell
Dottie Seamans	City of Sauk Rapids
Jared Gapinski	Benton County
Mike Conway	

Also in attendance were:

Brian Gibson	Saint Cloud APO
Alex McKenzie	Saint Cloud APO
Vicki Johnson	Saint Cloud APO

Online participants were:

Anna Pierce	Office of Sustainability and Public Health
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PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Mr. Gapinski motioned to approve the agenda, and Ms. Seamans seconded the motion. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: No members of the public were in attendance.

CONSIDERATION OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

- a. Approve Minutes of May 11, 2023, Policy Board Meeting.
- b. Approve Bills Lists.
- c. Approve Administrative Modification to FY2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- d. Receive Staff Report on May 26, 2023, Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee.

Mr. Kleis motioned to approve the consent agenda items, and Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Hear a Presentation on the Minnesota Carbon Reduction Strategy

Ms. Pierce virtually presented on the Carbon Reduction Strategy (CRS). Minnesota's CRS will identify priority strategies to reduce carbon from transportation in Minnesota and determine how to spend Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) funds. Mr. Kleis asked if the Policy Board should do the survey that was presented online. Mr. Gibson responded that there is a link and code specific to the Policy Board. Mr. Kleis

affirmed that the survey needs to be completed within the next seven days, and Mr. Gibson confirmed. Mr. Gibson stated that there are a lot of eligible projects under the CRP, and the goal of the CRS is to prioritize investment categories. Mr. Gibson asked Ms. Pierce if the state's priorities affect our local priorities. Ms. Pierce answered yes; the statewide guidance should be used as a benchmark, and the CRS will guide any programs that may reduce carbon. Mr. Gibson added that the TAC and Policy Board discussed CRP-eligible projects. In these discussions, the consensus has been that if there is already funding for a program such as bikeways, CRP funds should be used on a program without dedicated funding. Ms. Danielowski asked if the TAC had seen this presentation. Mr. Gibson responded with no, this is a policy matter, not a technical concern. Mr. Kleis was concerned that the survey for the Policy Board could get skewed if other people participated in the survey. Ms. Pierce answered that the link and code to this survey were only shared with APO Policy Board members, and every other MPO has a different link and code associated with the survey. There is also a public link on the Let's Talk Transportation website. Mr. Kleis asked that the results are shared with the Policy Board and notified if there is an anomaly. He also asked for the link to the public version of the survey that could be shared. Ms. Pierce asked Mr. Gibson to share the public survey link with the Policy Board members and affirmed that she would share the results. Ms. Pierce said they are getting input from MPOs and members of the public across the state, from MnDOT leadership and the CRP sub-working group. Ms. Danielowski asked for a copy of the presentation to be emailed to the Policy Board.

Informational only.

Consider Release of the Draft 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Public Review and Comment

Ms. Johnson presented on the TIP, which spans a period of four fiscal years and is updated on an annual basis. APO staff have cooperated with local jurisdictions, Saint Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission and Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) District 3 staff for several months to produce the yearly update to the APO's TIP. APO staff are in the final stages of preparing the FY 2024-2027 TIP for final approval and incorporation into the Minnesota State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). To do this, APO staff must release the FY 2024-2027 TIP for a 30-day public comment period.

Mr. Westerlund motioned to approve the release of the Draft 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program for public review and comment, and Mr. Kleis seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Hear Presentation on NorthStar Study

Mr. Gibson presented on the NorthStar Study. The Metropolitan Council has developed the Northstar Rail Corridor Post-Pandemic Study to inform decision-

making regarding the future of the Northstar Rail Corridor. Recognizing the decline in ridership and operational challenges precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, this study outlines and evaluates potential scenarios for providing transit service in the Northstar Corridor, including the continuation of commuter rail service, extension to Saint Cloud, and replacement with bus service. Ms. Danielowski stated that a partner county no longer favors NorthStar since COVID reduced the ridership and the service has been reduced. Ms. Danielowski is also worried about the possibility of replacing Northstar with buses since US 10 does not have bus-only lanes and is not designed for buses. Mr. Conway stated that additional lanes were added to I-94, so Northstar might not be needed. Also, public support from around the state may not be there, along with safety concerns in Minneapolis. Ms. Danielowski added that the Met Council is aware of the public safety concerns and is trying to address them. Mr. Kleis added that this study is similar to the study he co-authored 27 years ago to bring the Northstar to Saint Cloud, and certain circumstances have changed since then. He also stated that it wouldn't be in the best interest of the communities to repay federal funds. Ms. Danielowski added that multiple buses would be needed to replace the Northstar service and that train cars have much more capacity, not to mention buses navigating during winter. Mr. Kleis likes the idea of Amtrak taking over Northstar, which would be like New Jersey Transit, more of an intercity rail than commuter rail. Also, the Met Council will have difficulty operating the rail line out of its jurisdiction. Ms. Danielowski added that communities along the rail line petitioned to have stops and received federal funding based on that fact. She also added that the younger generation drives less and may want to use this service in the future. Mr. Gapinski reminded the group that the service must remain maintained and funded. Mr. Kleis stated that Amtrak leases the BNSF station on the east side of Saint Cloud, and that area would experience development. Mr. Conway added that the Northstar needs to be incorporated into the airport to make it cohesive. Mr. Kleis added that Metro Bus could run a service between the Northstar station and the airport. Mr. Anderson stated that the bus option was not good, and Mr. Kleis agreed. Ms. Danielowski stated that Northstar should fall under the CRP funds. Mr. Gibson added that there is a ton of federal funding for rail, but the pandemic killed ridership and is now up in the air. Mr. Conway added that ridership may never be at pre-pandemic levels since more people are working from home now. Mr. Gibson replied that one of the study's options is to convert Northstar from a commuter rail service to an intercity rail.

Informational only.

OTHER BUSINESS & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

No other business and announcements

Mr. Kleis motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Conway seconded the motion. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.