

SAINT CLOUD AREA PLANNING ORGANIZATION POLICY BOARD
Thursday, February 13, 2025 – 4:30 PM

A regular meeting of the Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization Policy Board was held on Thursday, February 13, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. APO Chair Jared Gapinski presided with the following members:

Jake Anderson	City of Saint Cloud
Mike Conway	City of Saint Cloud
Scott Brodeen	City of Saint Cloud
Dottie Seamans	City of Sauk Rapids
Mayor Adam Scepaniak	City of Saint Joseph
Mayor Ken Schmitt	City of Waite Park (Alternate for Frank Theisen)
Michael Kedrowski	Metro Bus (Alternate for Ryan Daniel)
Gary Gray	Sherburne County (Alternate for Raeanne Danielowski)
Joe Perske	Stearns County
Jeff Westerlund	Le Sauk Township

Also in attendance were:

Brian Gibson	Saint Cloud APO
Vicki Johnson	Saint Cloud APO
Alex McKenzie	Saint Cloud APO
James Stapfer	Saint Cloud APO
Trina Ness	Saint Cloud APO
David Turch	Turch & Associates
Elaine D. Temple	Turch & Associates
Scott Hedlund	City of Sauk Rapids, City Engineer
Jodi Teich	Stearns County, County Engineer
Karen Larson	Saint Cloud, Council Member
Kelly Beniek	Saint Joseph, Council Member
Steve Heinen	Benton County, Commissioner
Pam Benoit	Benton County, Commissioner
Jeff Bertram	Stearns County, Commissioner
Mayor Mark Husnik	Rockville
Anne Buckvold	Saint Cloud
James Alberts II	Saint Joseph
Richard Turch	Sauk Rapids
Jeff Kraemer	

Absent:

Tim Elness	City of Sartell
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- 1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 2. INTRODUCTIONS**

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Mr. Gapinski removed Item 5d, Approve Amendments and Administrative Modifications to the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) from the consent agenda due to the federal government's withdrawal of the National Electronic Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) funds/program.

Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the amended agenda. Ms. Seamans seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Ms. Johnson presented the updated information on Item 5d. Approve Amendments and Administrative Modifications to the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). At this time the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has asked us to suspend discussions, deliberations, and voting on the charging station that was slated to be discussed and voted on in the agenda. If FHWA gives guidance that the charging station can move forward in the future it only needs to be brought in front of the Policy Board for approval as all other processes have been completed.

Mr. Anderson moved approval of the agenda, pending the removal of Item 5d. Amendments and Administrative Modifications to the 2025-2028 TIP. Mr. Schmitt seconded the motion. Motion carried.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

- Ms. Buckvold spoke briefly regarding Transportation Day at the Capitol. She is an advocate for bringing the NorthStar and Amtrak rail to Saint Cloud. She stated there will be a public meeting regarding this on Saturday, April 26, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at Salem Lutheran Church, 90 Riverside Drive SE, St. Cloud, MN 56304.
- Pastor James Alberts II spoke in favor of supporting the rail initiative and his community involvement in bringing rail and better transportation services to central Minnesota.

5. CONSIDERATION OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

- a. Approve Minutes of January 9, 2025, Policy Board meeting
- b. Approve Bills List
- c. Approve Not Waiving Tort Liability Coverage Limits
- d. Approve Amendments and Administrative Modifications to the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- e. Receive Staff Report of Jan 22 Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC)
- f. Receive Staff Report of Jan. 27 Central Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (ATP-3)
- g. Receive Staff Report of Feb. 6 Meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Ms. Seamans moved to approve the amended consent agenda, with removal of Item 5d. Approval Amendments and Administrative Modifications to the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Mr. Conway seconded the motion. Motion carried.

6. INTRODUCTION TO THE APO

Mr. Gibson reviewed the history, purpose, and goals of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

7. PRESENTATION FROM DC LOBBYIST, DAVID TURCH

Mr. Turch gave a presentation on his background, his firm, as well as his goals for representing the APO and its partners.

8. CONSIDER FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION CHANGE FOR HEATHERWOOD ROAD

Ms. Johnson reviewed the purpose of functional classification and how it works. She also reviewed discussion and outcomes from the February 6, 2025, Technical Advisory Committee meeting regarding this topic.

Ms. Johnson reviewed functional classification and the purpose of the requested change in designation by the City of Saint Cloud for Heatherwood Road. Currently Heatherwood Road is a local (non-functionally classified) roadway. The City of Saint Cloud would like to change the functional classification designation to urban minor collector. The APO cannot award STBGP funds to a non-functionally classified roadway, therefore it is currently not eligible for federal funding. By changing the functional classification to urban minor collector, the City of Saint Cloud can apply for federal funds. There are federal guidelines and standards by FHWA which must be followed for designating roadways as far as collectors and arterials. The APO is in compliance with those guidelines. This change request is contingent upon STBGP funds being assigned to Heatherwood Road. If there are no STBGP funds assigned to Heatherwood Road, the City of Saint Cloud will withdraw this request.

After discussion regarding requirements, and how this would affect the Beaver Island Trail, Mr. Perske asked if this was unanimously supported by the TAC, to which Ms. Johnson replied, yes.

Mr. Conway motioned to approve the Functional Classification Change for Heatherwood Road contingent upon receiving STBGP funds. Mr. Perske seconded the motion. Motion carried.

9. CONSIDER FY 2027-2029 SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM (STBGP) APPLICATIONS

Ms. Johnson gave a broad overview and background of STBGP funding. She reviewed the 6 visioning statements within our long-range plan. The MTP has 118 projects identified split between capacity expansion and system reconstruction. Once the APO identifies those projects, we decide what will actually be constructed within the next 4 years, which is where the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) comes into play.

Ms. Johnson then explained how projects get into the TIP and the different grants available for federal transportation dollars which consist of STBGP, Transportation Alternatives (TA), Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), National Highway Performance Program (NHPP), as well as railroad safety projects. The STBGP is used by the APO to fund our road and bridge projects.

An entity can request up to 80% of the eligible construction costs, which requires the entity to match a 20% minimum.

Ms. Johnson explained how funds are given to the state, how the state divides those funds, the application process, and how the final decision is approved.

Ms. Johnson reviewed the different projects submitted for FY 2029 STBGP regional funding prioritization. The St. Cloud APO received two applications, and she reviewed them in the order they were received:

- Stearns County's CSAH 133 roundabout construction at Fourth Avenue S in Sartell
- City of Saint Cloud's Heatherwood Road extension.

Ms. Teich spoke in favor of the Stearns County CSAH 133 roundabout construction at Fourth Avenue S in Sartell. She stated this project is a partnership between Stearns County and the City of Sartell and they will share the project costs equally.

Ms. Johnson explained that the City of Saint Cloud is looking to extend Heatherwood Road to the north at Roosevelt Road/County Road 75, and to Eighth Avenue S (the ramps to the I-94/Opportunity Drive interchange) on the southern end.

Mr. Perske asked if this would be a connection for the Beaver Island Trail. Ms. Johnson stated that there is a gap in the Beaver Island Trail and this project will complete the full connection from the City of Saint Cloud to Clearwater. The City of Saint Cloud states this will be a reliever route for I-94, it's important for the Opportunity Drive business park and citizens living in that area connecting residents and employees to the downtown corridor without having to go on I-94.

Ms. Johnson stated that the TAC met last week and recommended that the funding should be split equally between both projects. The Stearns County project came in ranked number 1, but all funds can't be given to Stearns County because they would be over 80% federal funding. All funds could be given to the City of Saint Cloud, but the City of Saint Cloud's ranking came second from the technical perspective. This is the recommendation that the TAC made, but ultimately the decision is up to you.

Mr. Gapinski asked if both projects would move forward, and Ms. Johnson responded yes.

Ms. Seamans motioned to split the money at \$1,201,005 to the City of Saint Cloud for Heatherwood Road and \$1,201,005 to Stearns County for CSAH 133. Mr. Conway seconded the motion. Motion carried.

10. CONSIDER FY 2027-2029 CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAM (CRP) APPLICATIONS

Ms. Johnson explained the Carbon Reduction Program which was developed under the IJA to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from on-road highway sources. Entities can apply for 80% of eligible construction costs with 20% local match. To be eligible for CRP formula dollars, the proposed projects must align with the state's Carbon Reduction Strategy. Low Carbon Infrastructure Management consists of electrification, travel options (multimodal components, walking, biking, transit options), and low carbon infrastructure management (looking at ways we can move vehicles without having idling emissions (roundabouts, adaptive signal control, recycling pavement when building).

Minnesota allocates 65% of their CRP dollars to local agencies and is split by Urban areas having a population of 200,000 plus, Urban areas with a population of 50,000 plus, Urban areas with a population of 5,000 plus, and areas with a population under 5,000. The ATP-3 has their own allocation as well. The APO's CRP funding needs to be spent within our urban area. All areas applying for CRP that are not in our urban area submit applications to the ATP-3.

Ms. Johnson then went on to describe the solicitation for CRP funding received for our MPO. The City of Saint Cloud is applying for \$536,000 in federal funding for the construction of 22nd Street South. They are not asking for the full 80% because they can't match a federal grant with another federal grant. The TAC recommended funding the City of Saint Cloud with \$540,000. \$270,000 in FY 2027, and \$270,000 FY 2028. If awarded, the APO still has \$270,000 left for FY 2029.

Mr. Scepaniak motioned to approve the FY 2027-2029 Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) Award as recommended by the TAC. Mr. Conway seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Solicitations for FY 2029 will open in October.

11. CONSIDER FY 2027-2029 TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES (TA) APPLICATIONS

Ms. Johnson explained the Transportation Alternatives program which includes bicycle infrastructure, historic preservation, and scenic byways. Entities can apply for 80% federal funding with a 20% local match. Minnesota receives 2.4 million, and 50% goes to the metro MPO and the remainder is split between the other ATPs. Our ATP-3 applications are sent to Jeff Lenz with MnDOT District 3 and are reviewed by a 17-person panel. After the ATP-3 panel reviews the applications, a technical analysis/scoring is completed. When the technical analysis/scoring is complete, the panel adds regional priority points which consist of 10 priority points for your number 1 project and 5 regional priority points for your number 2 project. The panel then determines who will receive funding. This year there are 12 applications to review.

The City of Saint Cloud has submitted their 22nd Street So project for TA funding, and it's the same information that I gave before regarding the CRP funding.

The City of Sauk Rapids submitted a project for a grade-separated trail extension along the east side of Mayhew Lake Road. A planning study along Mayhew Lake Road has been completed, and they've incorporated that into their application.

Mr. Gapinski stated that the two referendums passed in Sauk Rapids for a sports complex, and an early childhood care center. Mr. Hedlund has been coordinating and collaborating with ISD 47, the County Engineer and the County Board. Sauk Rapids will be receiving easements from the school district for this construction.

The TAC felt that both projects were of equal technical merit and felt that both projects are needed. The concern is the uncertainty related to CRP funding at the national level. The intent is that if the City of Saint Cloud would receive the CRP funding, which you just awarded, they would then rescind their application from the TA program. The APO is uncertain as to what will happen with the CRP program. Ms. Johnson has advised all applicants that we will keep your application active until we have more clarity, the City of Saint Cloud could rescind the TA application should they receive CRP funding. The TAC felt that if the 10 regional priority points were awarded to the City of Saint Cloud and gave the City of Sauk Rapids 5 priority points, the City of Sauk Rapids' project could fall short of receiving funding. This went to a roll call vote.

The first roll call vote was to decide if the City of Saint Cloud would receive 10 priority points, and the City of Sauk Rapids would receive 5 priority points. This roll call vote failed at 5-5 with one abstention. It was then motioned that the City of Sauk Rapids receive the 10 priority points, and the City of Saint Cloud receive 5 regional priority points. This roll call vote was 8-2 with one abstention. The motion carried.

Mr. Perske motioned to award the City of Sauk Rapids 10 regional priority points and the number one ranking, and the City of Saint Cloud the number two ranking with 5 priority points. Mr. Scepianiak seconded the motion. Motion carried.

12. OTHER BUSINESS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Gibson stated that while the message out of DC is very confusing and chaotic, the message the APO is receiving from FHWA is to continue doing our job the way we've been doing it until or unless we get official guidance from either US DOT or MnDOT telling us otherwise.

Mr. Perske stated that it was Transportation Alliance at the Capitol today. People in attendance were able to hear the Governor and Commissioner Daubenger speak, and they were fairly optimistic about maintaining funding for transportation. He stated he did get a chance to advocate for our local projects to both senators and house members and despite what's been in the media, it seemed to be very friendly, and that was encouraging.

There was a lot of discussion regarding an application for a Sherburne County EIS regarding a gravel mining operation in the area of where the APO has been looking at placing the river crossing.

13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:24 p.m.