



# Corridors of Commerce: Background, Issues, and Future Ideas

# Legislative History

- 2013 - Program created and \$300 M in bonds provided to fund projects (*priority was to get projects under construction*)
- 2014 - \$6.5 M provided for Greater Mn projects only, as part of a legislative agreement (*priority was to projects ready for future COC funding*)
- 2015 - \$25 M in funds provided, with 50% for Greater Mn projects and 50% for Metro area projects (*priority was to get projects ready for future COC funding*)

# Legislative History

- 2017 - \$300 M in bonds, along with \$25 M in annual trunk highway cash
- 2017 - Changes are approved in response to the 2016 Legislative Auditors Report on MnDOT's Project Selection Process
- 2018 - \$400 M in bonds (*priority for funds was established by special criteria*)
- 2021 - \$200 M in bonds (*MnDOT must begin solicitation by August 1, 2022*)

# 2017 Legislative Changes

- Requires MnDOT to score and rank all submitted project recommendations using all the eight evaluation criteria in the law and only those eight criteria
- Prohibited MnDOT from considering project deliverability as a criteria
- Clarified that MnDOT must accept project recommendations from area transportation partnerships and other interested stakeholders

# Sample of Projects

## 2013

- Highway 14 – Nicollet to North Mankato 4-lane expansion
- Highway 610 – Freeway completion to I-94

## 2014

- Highway 34 – Center turn lane installation in Detroit Lakes
- Highway 23 – Environmental work for Richmond to New London Expansion

## 2015

- Highway 14 – Preliminary design for intersection with Highway 15
- I-35W – Preliminary design for interchange with I-494

# Sample of Projects

## 2017

- I-94 – Expand to six lanes from Rogers to St. Michael
- Highway 169 – Convert to freeway in Elk River
- I-35W – Expand interchange with I-494
- I-494 – Add EZPass from France Avenue to Highway 77

## 2018

- Highway 23 – New London to Richmond expand to 4-lanes
- Highway 14 – Owatonna to Dodge Center expand to 4-lanes
- Highway 252 – Convert to freeway/EZPass Dowling to Highway 610



# Issues with the Current Process

# Number of Projects Needing Evaluation

- MnDOT received 173 unique project recommendations
- 2017 changes required all 173 to be developed, evaluated, estimated, and scored
- Significant amount of time and effort by MnDOT and local agencies





# Interpretation of Regional Balance



- MnDOT utilized its historical soft 50-50 approach regional balance criteria
- This meant about 50% of the funding was in the eight counties of the MnDOT Metro District and 50% for Greater Minnesota
- After announcement of the 2017 project selections, significant pushback on interpretation of regional balance

# Interpretation of Regional Balance

- When the 2017 funding projects were announced, they were at the following locations:
  - I-494 – France Avenue to TH 77 in Metro District
  - I-494/I-35 W Intersection in Metro District
  - TH 169 Elk River in District 3
  - I-94 – St. Michael to Albertville in District 3
- The selection of these projects resulted in extensive criticism of MnDOT's interpretation of regional balance



# MnDOT Ideas for Improvement

# Local Stakeholder Screening Process

- Addition of a new screening step in the project evaluation process
- Have a local stakeholder group (*for example, an Area Transportation Partnership*) screen down the number of project recommendations MnDOT would need to advance to development and scoring
- The goal would be to limit the amount of project recommendations MnDOT would need to take through the complete development, estimation, evaluation, and scoring process

# Define Regional Balance in the Law

- Add a definition of “Regional Balance”
  - Approximately 50% to be spent within eight counties which make up MnDOT’s Metro District and approximately 50% to be spent in greater Minnesota
- Goal would be to provide clear understanding of what is meant by “Regional Balance”

# Creation of a Small Projects Category

- MnDOT is looking at the potential to divide both the Greater Minnesota and Metro area portions into two categories:

Large Projects = Projects greater than \$10 M

Small Projects = Project less than or equal to \$10 M

- 25% of each area's funding would be for small projects
- Goal would be to have the program spread projects across more areas of the state

# Work in Progress

MnDOT is still working with legislators, the Met Council, and local officials to modify the proposal and identify potential other improvements to Corridors of Commerce



# Thank You

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