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**Sponsor:** Public Works

**Meeting Date:** 11/21/2023

**Title:** Amendment to the Capital Grant Agreement with Metropolitan Council and Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority for the Project Development Phase of the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project

**File Number:** 2023-507

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**Background and Rationale:**

The METRO Purple Bus Rapid Transit Project (Project) entered the Project Development (PD) phase of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program on December 10, 2021. As initially envisioned, the Project was a 15-mile dedicated guideway bus rapid transit project between Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul and downtown White Bear Lake generally along Robert Street, Jackson Street, Phalen Boulevard, Ramsey County rail right of way co-located with the Bruce Vento Regional Trail and Highway 61. In spring 2022, it became clear that the project would not go to downtown White Bear Lake resulting in the understanding of a Route Modification Study. The initial phase of the Route Modification Study evaluated multiple locations for a new northern terminus, including Maplewood Mall Transit Center, I-35E & County Road E park & ride in Vadnais Heights and Century College. Results of this phase concluded that terminating at the Maplewood Mall Transit Center proved to be the option that would likely qualify for federal funding. Following the conclusion of the initial phase, additional engagement took place where concerns were raised about the profound changes seen by public transit since 2020 and their impact on the Project. This resulted in Project taking set back to evaluate the Maryland/White Bear Avenue routing option so that it could be compared to the routing option along the Bruce Vento Regional Trail. This new routing option diverges from the existing Bruce Vento Trail route at Maryland Avenue and travels along Maryland and White Bear avenues until reaching Beam Avenue and traveling to the Maplewood Mall area. Options for the route to continue beyond Maplewood Mall Transit Center will continue to be explored during the evaluation of this new route.

Because of the evaluation of a new routing option, the completion of PD will take additional time. On November 3, 2023, the FTA granted the Metropolitan Council an extension of the PD phase until December 9, 2024. This extension ensures that the project remains eligible for future federal matching funds. Currently, the project is 100% funded by Ramsey County and the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority through the Capital Grant Agreement for the Project Development Phase of the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project with the Metropolitan Council (Agreement). The Agreement was entered into by the Metropolitan Council, Ramsey County, and the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority to manage agency roles and obligations during PD. The Agreement expires on December 8, 2023, and needs to be amended for regional railroad authority funding to continue to be used on the Project.

The First Amendment to the Capital Grant Agreement for the Project Development Phase of the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project with the Metropolitan Council (Amendment) provides for continued regional railroad authority funding for the Project. This Amendment does the following:

- Extends the term of the Agreement to December 31, 2025.
- Amends the Initial Grant Activity Period to continue through the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative, which is anticipated by September 2024.

- Creates a Second Grant Activity Period that commences after the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative through completion of the PD Phase or December 31, 2025.

The total funding commitment between the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority and Ramsey County for PD remains unchanged at \$39,900,000 and will continue to fund the following tasks:

- Project Management
- Advanced Engineering/Design
- Environmental Reevaluated and Peer Review
- Public Engagement

Funding for PD will be provided in accordance with the funding commitment resolutions approved by Ramsey County and Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority through separate board actions. Funding commitments are consistent with financial projections made for the Ramsey County Transit Portfolio Status and Financial Projection workshop held on November 3, 2020.

**Recommendation:**

The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority resolved to:

1. Approve the Amendment to the Capital Grant Agreement for the Project Development Phase by and among the Metropolitan Council, Ramsey County, and the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority for the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project.
2. Authorize the Chair to execute the Agreement.
3. Authorize the County Manager to enter into agreements and contracts and execute amendments to agreements and contracts in accordance with procurement policies and procedures, provided the amounts are within the limits of funding.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Reinhardt, seconded by Commissioner Xiong. Motion passed.

Aye: - 6: Frethem, Martinson, McGuire, Ortega, Reinhardt, and Xiong

Absent: - 1: Moran

By:   
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Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board