
Sponsor: Public Works

Meeting Date: 10/5/2021

Title: Funding Commitment for the Development Phase of the
METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project

File Number: 2021-400

Background and Rationale:

The Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project has been led by Ramsey County on behalf of the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) in coordination with the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and local municipalities. The Rush Line BRT Project is a planned 15-mile transit route with stops between Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul and downtown White Bear Lake. The Rush Line BRT Project is currently in the Environmental Analysis Phase (EAP). Upon completion of the EAP, with the receipt of the Environmental Decision and acceptance into the Project Development Phase of the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grants Program (CIGP) as a New Starts project, the Rush Line BRT Project will transition to the Metropolitan Council and be rebranded as the METRO Purple Line BRT Project.

Project Development is the first phase of the CIGP for New Starts Projects which lasts up to two years. Project Development is followed by the Engineering and Construction Phases. All projects in the program must receive an overall medium rating to advance into the Engineering phase and to receive a Full Funding Grant Agreement for the federal share of the project. Once in the CIGP, Project expenditures are eligible for a federal match, though no federal funding is provided until the Full Funding Grant Agreement is awarded upon entry to the Construction Phase. This results in non-federal funding covering 100% of Project costs for the Project Development and Engineering phases with reimbursement of the federal share of the cost for these phases as well as construction, currently assumed at 49%, occurring as part of the Full Funding Grant Agreement.

In order for the Metropolitan Council to apply for and be granted entry into the Project Development Phase of the New Starts Program by the Federal Transit Administration, a local financial commitment for the cost of the Project Development Phase of the Project is required. The Project Development Phase for the METRO Purple Line BRT Project is estimated to cost \$39,900,000 and include the following tasks:

- Project Management
- Advanced Engineering/Design
- Environmental Reevaluated and Peer Review
- Right-of-way Acquisition
- Public Engagement

Funding for the Project Development Phase will be jointly committed by the Ramsey County and RCRRA. This financial commitment is consistent with financial projections made for the Ramsey County Transit Portfolio Status and Financial Projection workshop held on November 3, 2020.

To manage the agency roles and obligations during the Project Development Phase, anticipated to begin in October 2021, the Metropolitan Council, Ramsey County and the RCRRA will enter into a Capital Grant Agreement for the Project Development Phase of the METRO Purple Line BRT Project 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.

The Metropolitan Council will not seek entry into Project Development for the METRO Purple Line BRT Project without the execution of the Ramsey County Parties joint financial commitment for the Project Development Phase of the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project.

Additional information of the Rush Line BRT Project can be found on the County website:

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/roads-transit/transit-corridors-studies/rush-line-brt-project>

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

Approve the Ramsey County portion of the Ramsey County and Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority joint financial commitment of \$39,900,000 for the Project Development Phase of the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project as follows:

- a. Financial commitment is contingent upon the following conditions being met or occurring:
 - i. No expenditures for right-of-way acquisition may be incurred or obligated prior to the completion of any necessary state and federal environmental review and findings and publication of the Environmental Decision Document in the Federal Registrar.
 - ii. Any expenditure of Ramsey County Parties' (Ramsey County and Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority) funds pursuant to a Letter of No Prejudice issued by the Federal Transit Administration or pre-award authority is subject to the prior approval of the Ramsey County Parties.
 - iii. Ramsey County Parties must review and approve the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project scope, cost estimate and schedule at the completion of 30% design, 60% design, 90% design and 100% design.
 - iv. The METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project contingency shall be managed in accordance with the procedures established by the Ramsey County Parties in the METRO Purple Line Capital Grant Agreement with the Metropolitan Council.
 - v. Funds may be only used for Federal Transit Administration Capital Investment Grants Program and federally eligible activities.
 - vi. In the event the Federal Transit Administration deems any METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project expenditure as ineligible to qualify as part of the local match for the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project pursuant to a Full Funding Grant Agreement, the Metropolitan Council shall reimburse Ramsey County Parties for its proportional share of all ineligible expenditures.
 - vii. Fulfillment of the financial commitment for the Project Development Phase is subject to the availability and provision of sufficient funding from the process of taxes authorized by Minnesota Statutes Section 297A.993 and associated financing; payment of the funding commitment in any year is subject to appropriation by Ramsey County and Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority; and execution and fulfillment of grant agreement(s) by the Metropolitan Council.

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

Aye: - 7: Carter, Frethem, MatasCastillo, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

By: 

Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board