

## Request for Board Action Details

**File #:** 2021-398

**Type:** Administrative Item      **Status:** Passed

**In control:** Board of Commissioners

**On agenda:** 10/5/2021      **Final action:** 10/5/2021

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

**Sponsors:** Public Works

**Indexes:**

**Code sections:**

**Attachments:** 1. Capital Grant Agreement, 2. Resolution

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
10/5/2021	1	Board of Commissioners	approved	Pass

**Sponsor:** Public Works

**Title**

Capital Grant Agreement with Metropolitan Council and Ramsey County for the Project Development Phase of the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project

**Recommendation**

1. Approve 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.

**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 New Starts Program which lasts up to two years. Project Development is followed by the Engineering and Construction Phases. The project 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 New Starts Program, 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 for cost for these phases as well as construction, currently assumed at 49%, occurring as part of the Full Funding Grant Agreement.

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 developed the Capital Grant Agreement for the Project Development Phase of the METRO Purple Line BRT Project. Consistent with the approach utilized for the METRO Gold Line BRT Project's Project Development and Engineering agreements, the Capital Grant Agreement for the Project Development Phase of the METRO Purple Line BRT Project breaks funding for the two-year Project Development Phase into two 12-month grant activity periods.

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 provided in accordance with the funding commitment resolutions approved by RCRRA 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 Capital Grant Agreement for the Project Development Phase of the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project.

Additional information on 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>

**County Goals** (Check those advanced by Action)

- Well-being       Prosperity       Opportunity       Accountability

**Racial Equity Impact**

The Rush Line BRT Project will serve a racially diverse area. The Rush Line BRT Project provides transportation connections to areas of concentrated poverty where more than 50% of the residents are racially and ethnically diverse and Indigenous people. In these areas, auto ownership rates are low, and people depend on public transit for access to jobs, health care, shopping and other trips. Other neighborhoods along the route, while not considered areas of concentrated poverty, are becoming more racially and economically diverse and are home to a significant number of households that do not own a car. The Rush Line BRT Project will improve access to opportunities by providing more frequent, reliable and comfortable service that is better connected to job centers, neighborhoods, parks and recreation and other parts of the regional transit system.

**Community Participation Level and Impact**

The goal of the Rush Line BRT Project public engagement effort is to inform the Environmental Assessment and guide the development of the Rush Line BRT Project design so that it best addresses community needs. A communication and public engagement plan has been prepared for the Environmental Analysis Phase.

The plan established the following goals:

- Inform a diverse public.
- Collect input from a diverse public.

- Use public input to shape the project.

This plan describes and examines the demographic characteristics of study area communities and identified strategies to effectively engage with these populations. Racially and ethnically diverse residents make up over half of the population within one-half mile of the route. The plan also established four criteria for prioritizing attendance at events:

- equity,
- inclusivity,
- geographic representation, and
- maximization of voices heard.

Project staff used these criteria to focus public engagement efforts in areas with significant communities of color and/or low-income populations, hosting and attending events at locations including the Mt. Airy public housing complex, which is adjacent to the Mt. Airy Street station; Hmong Village, a shopping center with over 250 Hmong vendors that is located near the Cook Avenue station; and Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio, an organization on Saint Paul's East Side that serves Latino residents.

The communication and public engagement plan can be found here:

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Projects%20and%20Initiatives/2018%2006%2008%20CPEP.pdf>

Throughout the environmental analysis phase, Ramsey County staff sought and gathered input to inform project decisions that could be shaped by public feedback. Project staff documented this input and shared it with the Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Advisory Committee, which considered this input when making decisions regarding station locations, design of the guideway and the Bruce Vento Regional Trail within the Ramsey County rail right of way and other project elements. During the Environmental Analysis public comment period from May 15, 2021 through June 25, 2021 Ramsey County hosted two online and one virtual open house events and received 190 comments from agencies, organizations and individuals on the Environmental Assessment. In total, from March 2018 to July 2021, Ramsey County has hosted or attended 164 events and spoke to approximately 3,000 people. Through these public engagement activities, Ramsey County staff have recorded more than 2,700 comments from residents and other stakeholders.

Once the project transitions to the Project Development Phase and becomes the METRO Purple Line BRT, the Metropolitan Council will update the community and public engagement plan and additional engagement activities will be held prior to and during construction. The Capital Grant Agreement includes resources for staff and consultants to conduct additional engagement.

Inform       Consult       Involve       Collaborate       Empower

### **Fiscal Impact**

The \$39,900,000 requested to fund the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project's Project Development Phase is available in the Public Works Multimodal Capital Projects.

### **County Manager Comments**

No additional comments.

### **Last Previous Action**

None.

### **Attachments**

1. Capital Grant Agreement