

Request for Board Action Details

File #: 2021-401
Type: Administrative Item
Status: Passed
In control: Regional Railroad Authority
On agenda: 10/5/2021
Final action: 10/5/2021
Title: Funding Commitment for the Development Phase of the METRO Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project
Sponsors: Public Works
Indexes:
Code sections:
Attachments: 1. Resolution

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
10/5/2021	1	Regional Railroad Authority	approved	Pass

Sponsor: Public Works

Title

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

Recommendation

Approve the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority 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

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.

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 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 joint financial commitment by Ramsey County Parties 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 BRT 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.None.