

2026 Unified Planning Work Program Update



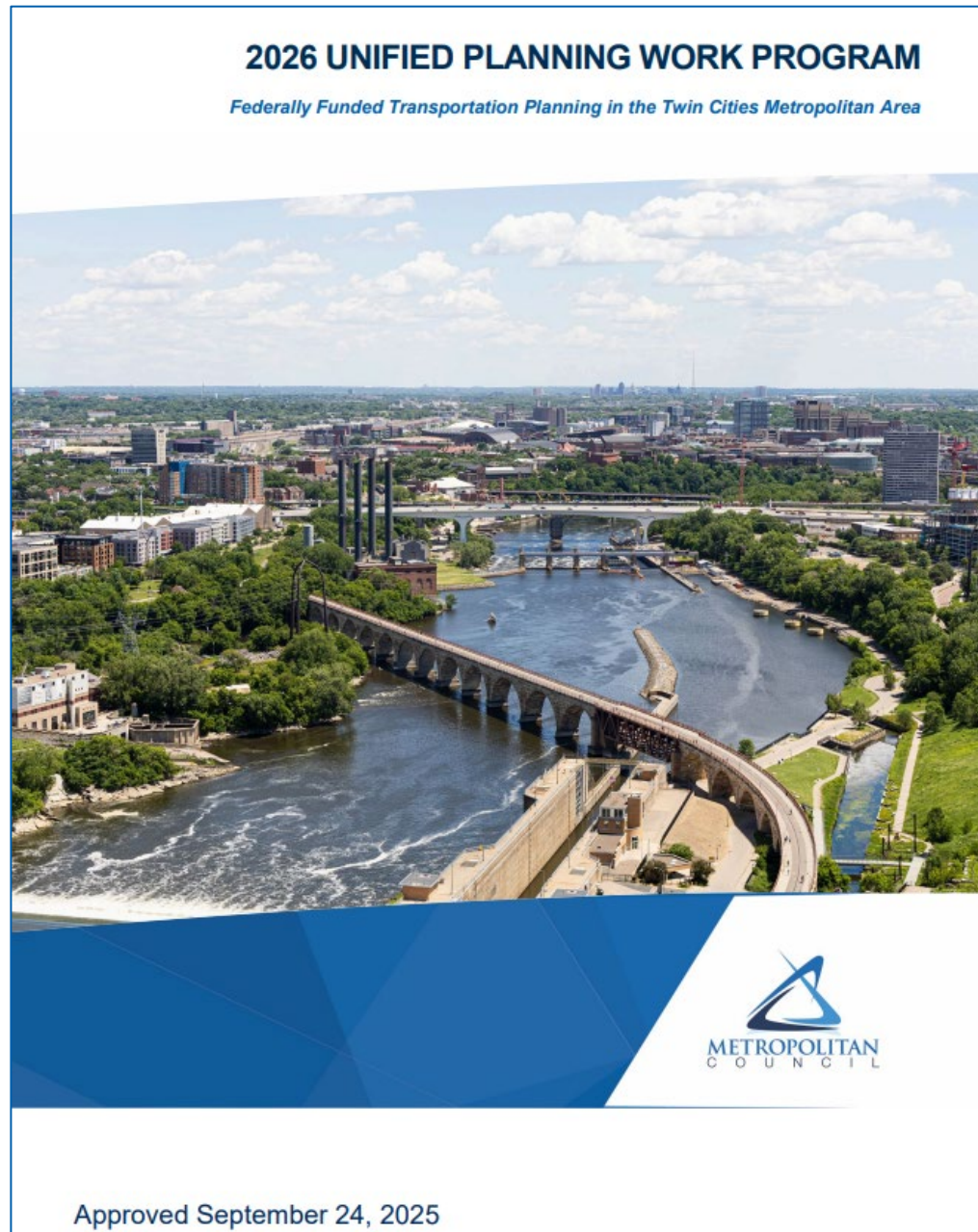
March 2026



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Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)



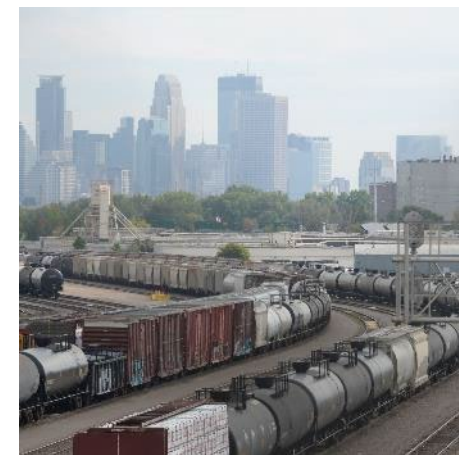
The UPWP is an annual plan of federally funded and Council-involved transportation planning activities.

- Outlines and describes regional transportation planning activities for the calendar year
- Serves as application for federal transportation planning funds
- Includes planning studies' descriptions, schedules, costs, deliverables
- Includes partner-led studies that include Met Council staff
- Transportation planning activities that are fully regionally funded are described separately in the Regional Transportation Planning Work Program

Today's Goal

Review current planning studies and begin to identify opportunities in 2027

- Update on 2026 UPWP projects
- Begin to discuss potential additional planning studies to initiate in 2027; Opportunity for further discussion at April TAC Planning meeting



2026 UPWP Study Updates



Ongoing Studies & Major Projects – Began Prior to 2026

Federally Funded Studies

- Metropolitan Highway System Harms, Impacts, and Mitigation Priorities Study
- Transportation Research Program
- Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan

Federally Funded Studies cont.

- Evaluation of Forecast Accuracy & Robustness
- Outreach and Engagement for Transportation Studies Master Contract
- Regional Sidewalk Dataset Study (Phase 1)
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Demand Estimation Tool

Regionally Funded Studies

- Midtown Greenway Bicycle & Pedestrian Trail Expansion Planning Project
- Regional Aviation System Planning Consultant
- Community Considerations Criteria & Measures

Studies Upcoming in 2026 and Carrying into 2027



Federally Funded Studies

- Community Assessment and Engagement Guide
- Managed Lane Vision and System Study, Phase 4
- Integrating TDM into Highway Planning Processes
- Existing Freeway Interchange Improvement and Modernization Study
- Safer Connections to Transit
- Complete Streets Local Implementation Guide
- 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update Tools and Guides
- Travel Model Updates
- RBTN Rural Connections

Studies Upcoming in 2026 and Carrying into 2027



Regionally Funded Studies

- Electric Vehicle Public Engagement
- Electric Vehicle City Support
- 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update Tools and Guides
- Regional TDM Program Naming and Branding
- Community Considerations Workshops and Scoring

Looking Ahead to the 2027 UPWP



2027 UPWP Development and Adoption Schedule (Tentative)



- **March-April 2026:** Gather input on planning study needs and topics
- **May 2026:** Prepare draft document
- **June-July 2026:** TAC Planning reviews and recommends release for public comment. FHWA, MnDOT, and other agencies review; *Tentative public comment period June 12 – July 17*
- **July 2026:** TAC and TAB reviews and recommends draft UPWP for adoption
- **August 2026:** Transportation Committee reviews and recommends, and Council adopts
- **September 2026:** UPWP sent to MnDOT and FHWA for approval

Discussion



2027 Work Program

- All major studies must be identified in the 2027 UPWP
- Staff/budget capacity for 1-3 additional studies
- **Are there major policy areas of concern or interest for 2027 that are not addressed in past or existing work program projects?**
- **Are there needs for regional system studies to help prioritize transportation investments?**
- **Are there training needs or technical assistance tools that would be beneficial?**
- **Are there other internal or consultant study efforts that we should consider?**

Thank you

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2026 UPWP Project Descriptions

Purpose & Key Tasks



2050 Comprehensive Planning Technical Assistance



Our transportation system is the essential pathway that connects people, communities, and commerce. It grants access to all the places we want to reach – and offers choices for how to get there. That's why we partner with counties, cities, and townships to imagine, plan, and create a system that keeps our region moving.

What the Transportation Policy Plan covers

The Transportation Policy Plan is part of a set of policy plans aiming to achieve the vision, values, and goals of Imagine 2050. It focuses on:

- **State Highways:** Guides major highway investments by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, including projects like E-ZPass lanes, new freeway interchanges, and traffic safety improvements.
- **Transit:** Directs major transit investments through Metro Transit and other regional providers, and provides general guidance on transit system management. It covers projects like the METRO network's Gold Line, E Line, and F Line bus rapid transit projects.
- **Local Projects:** Supports federal and local investments in transportation projects by townships, cities, counties, and park agencies – like roads, bridges, transit, and walking and biking infrastructure. These federally funded projects are recommended by the Transportation Advisory Board through a competitive selection process, aiming to improve mobility, manage congestion, and enhance air quality.
- **Long-range Planning:** Helps local governments update their comprehensive plans. It includes guidance on addressing climate change, improving traffic safety, and supporting travel options. It also provides planning tools like the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network, regional truck freight corridors, and transit market areas.

A prosperous, equitable, and resilient region with abundant opportunities for all to live, work, play, and thrive.

MOVING THE REGION FORWARD



Purpose

This project will develop technical assistance materials to support cities, townships, and counties in developing their comprehensive plan updates to meet or be consistent with the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan.

Included in federal and regional work program to respond to full Imagine 2050 technical assistance needs.

Tasks

- Assess the technical assistance needs and determine which are high priority that will require consultant support.
- Hire consultant(s) to develop roughly three to six technical assistance materials based on prioritized list.

Aviation Planning & Implementation

Purpose

Support MAC work and update the Aviation System Plan

Tasks

- **Aviation System Plan update**
 - Completed in first quarter, 2026
- **Other Work**
 - Tracking regional aviation planning work and providing technical assistance to staff when needed.
 - Monitor, support and coordinate with MAC planning initiatives.
 - Coordinate with MnDOT and FAA planning efforts.



Community Assessment & Engagement Guide



Purpose

Provide guidance on identifying and defining community demographics and characteristics, considering history, methods for mapping community assets and context, and engaging with communities about their transportation needs.

Tasks

- Review and summarize relevant local, regional, state and federal work related to methodologies for identifying community characteristics and assets.
- Engage community members and our partner staff and policy makers at key points to develop this guide.
- Develop a guide to provide assistance on gaining and using community knowledge during project development.

Community Considerations Training



Purpose

This project continues implementation of the Equity Evaluation of Regional Transportation Investments study with training for local partners on the use and application of the framework and tool.

Tasks

- Develop training plan and schedule and deliver training sessions.
- Review evaluations and implement any needed changes.

Complete Streets Local Implementation Guide



Purpose

Provide partners with guidance adapting roadway design to different land use contexts including implementation guidance on common Complete Streets project elements, recommend actions for prioritizing projects with Complete Streets elements in selection processes, and provide a land use and traveler-sensitive supplement to functional classification.

Tasks

- A street typology guide, informed by land use community designations and road function, with paired design guidance.
- Recommended actions for implementing Complete Streets principles in project selection processes.
- Guidance for coordinating livability improvements (e.g., economic development, placemaking) with roadway projects.
- Stakeholder engagement and training with implementing partners and other interested groups.

Electric Vehicle Work



Electric Vehicle Public Engagement & City Support

- Identify and address knowledge gaps with key stakeholders
- Procurement summer, project continues into 2026

Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Program

- Still waiting on update from Federal Government

Existing Interchange Modernization Study



Purpose

Prioritize improvements on existing interchanges based on infrastructure condition; presence of bicycle, pedestrian, and transit elements; and mobility, resiliency, freight, safety, and other factors.

Project submitted for 2026 BUILD Planning grant.

Tasks

- System analysis to identify planning level needs at existing interchanges in the region.
- Engage with stakeholders to identify important factors for consideration in analysis and prioritization.
- Conduct a regional project process review to understand how, when, and where local governments are making investments.
- Develop a prioritized list of interchanges for investment.

Evaluation of Forecast Accuracy & Robustness



Purpose

Several recent corridor studies and projects have demonstrated that regional traffic growth over the past two decades is inconsistent with previous highway forecasts. An examination is needed to assess the accuracy of past forecasts and to identify underlying causes of any discrepancies and to develop recommendations to improve the forecasting practices.

Tasks

- Review past corridor-level highway forecasts in the region from 2010 to 2020.
- Conduct an analysis of overall accuracy and the causes of any inaccuracies.
- Review current forecasting practices and make recommendations for improvement.

Framework for Accessibility to Public Health Destinations



Purpose

Accessibility measures frequently focus on how many jobs people reach in a certain amount of time by different travel modes (for example, bus, car, bike, etc.), but people need to access more than just jobs and shopping centers. To maintain and improve their quality of life, people need access to services such as food, health care, educational facilities, restorative open spaces, and social and cultural events. This study will identify these types of locations and how to incorporate into accessibility measures. Initial scoping identified that this work will be done internally

Tasks

- Work with partners to identify and then create an inventory of essential destinations in different community contexts (including rural areas) that positively contribute to public health.
- Expand existing accessibility analysis to include an evaluation of accessibility to these public health destinations across the region.

Integrating TDM into Highway Planning Processes



Purpose

Build on Regional TDM Action Plan, 2050 TPP, and Congestion Management Process to integrate TDM considerations into highway project development processes as one action to help reduce the need for highway expansion.

Tasks

- Document existing highway project development processes for different project types where TDM may be an appropriate tool.
- Relate TDM Policies and Actions to different project types to create a context sensitive approach.
- Create tools and frameworks that can easily integrate into existing processes.
- Identify case studies to illustrate real world examples of approaches.

Managed Lane System Study, Phase 4



Purpose

In partnership with MnDOT, will update the MnPASS (now E-ZPass) System Study Phase 3, published in 2017 to identify priority areas for future E-ZPass lane investments.

Tasks

- Before and after analysis at managed lane.
- Identify where managed lane investments would be most impactful, considering factors like unreliable vehicle and transit travel times, safety, and affordability.
- Develop a potential implementation framework with prioritized locations that coordinate with identified investments in the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan.

Metropolitan Highway System Harms, Impacts, & Mitigation Priorities



Purpose

Identify past and on-going harms caused by the metropolitan highway system and identify and prioritize potential mitigation actions and investments

Tasks

- Identify range and impacts of harms experienced.
- Identify corridors, communities, demographics of those impacted by past and ongoing harms of the highway system.
- Identify and describe actions, mitigations, investments that could potentially repair and mitigate harms and potential costs and funding sources.
- Evaluate current processes and develop policies for preventing future harms and impacts.

Microtransit Policy Framework



Purpose

To develop regional policy as well as performance and design guidance microtransit like those for fixed route service in the TPP. The region's microtransit services fill various roles such as connecting to transitways, replacing local fixed-route service, first-last mile solution, and coverage service. Transit providers currently have different approaches to scheduling technology, fare structure, vehicle type, and other factors that make rider experience inconsistent.

Tasks

- Document existing micro transit services in the region, consistencies and inconsistencies, service purpose and features, expansion plans, and evaluation measures.
- Develop region-wide policy recommendations to improve rider experience on microtransit across systems (e.g. fares or transfers).
- Develop guidance to assist transit providers and local communities with implementing microtransit service across various regional contexts (e.g. performance evaluation or service design)

Midtown Greenway Trail Expansion



Purpose

Plan a continuous and dedicated bicycle/pedestrian trail from the eastern terminus of the current Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis across the Mississippi River and terminating at Allianz Field in St. Paul with trail connection approaching U of M and Prospect Park neighborhood.

Tasks

- Develop concept layouts for extending the Greenway and to advance it into project development
- Coordination with Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway on acceptable trail options within its right-of-way
- High-level review of likely environmental issues and recommendations for appropriate environmental review process to move project forward
- Final Report will include a Project Implementation Plan that lays out the processes and detailed steps to complete design and construction

Outreach & Engagement for Transportation Studies



Master contract to supplement engagement for ongoing transportation studies

- Amending the existing master contract to select 3-5 firms; selection is in progress.
- Multiple efforts used/using the master contract to date
 - Travel Demand Management study
 - Transportation Policy Plan Goals and Objectives engagement
 - Transportation Needs Assessment
 - Regional Solicitation public engagement

Pedestrian & Bicycle Demand Estimation Tool



Purpose

Develop a tool that spatially estimates current pedestrian and bicycle travel and identifies areas with future or latent demand. The tool could inform project selection processes and provide technical assistance for local transportation and comprehensive planning.

Tasks

- Implementing partner stakeholder engagement
- Develop a model to estimate current and future travel
- Validate model and mapping tool as implemented by Met Council staff
- Provide recommendations on use cases and frequency of updates

Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan

Purpose

Federal law requires large MPOs to adopt and periodically update a Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan. Updating the region's coordinated plan will increase understanding of public transit and human service transportation coordination opportunities for better coordination to minimize service duplication and unmet needs in the region.

Tasks

- Review related plans and activities in the region and compare to peers
- Establish steering committee with agency partner representation to provide plan direction.
- Review changes in state and federal laws or rules.
- Establish and prioritize needs and strategies for associated federal funding sources that support coordination of human services transportation and public transit.



Regional Model Work

Travel Model Speed Data Improvement

- Identify and prepare road speed data for model inputs and validation
- Evaluate methods, classifications, and functions for calculating speeds, including roadway classification schemes, area classification schemes, volume-delay functions, and E-ZPass diversion functions

Freight Model Update

- Start of multi-year project
- Incorporate best practices in freight modeling
- Address findings and recommendations from the 2023 Urban Freight Distribution Study

Network Mgmt Software

- On-call contract to make small enhancements and bug fixes in model network management software.

Regional Sidewalk Data Inventory



Develop sidewalk data set for regional planning

- Need for routable data covering MPO planning area in 9 counties
- Work with local and internal partners on identifying initial data attributes and level of detail
- Two phases
 - Phase 1: Identify data needs/level of detail and technical options
 - Phase 2: Data collection/validation

Safer Connections to Transit



Purpose

The Regional Pedestrian Safety Action Plan identified that significant percentages of severe pedestrian crashes happen near transit stops or stations, although this does not mean that transit is *causing* these crashes. This project will conduct additional study on the relationship with pedestrian safety and elements of transit system design and roadway design that can affect traffic safety outcomes for pedestrians.

Tasks

- Engage riders and nearby residents on safety-related barriers to accessing nearby transit services.
- Analyze data for risk factors relating to transit system design and severity of pedestrian crashes.
- Create methodology and identify locations where improvements may be needed and strategies to address those needs.

Transportation Research Program



- *Transit Impact Research Program* will fund a portion of a transit research project to be selected in early 2026 by the funding partners of the program at the UMN. This is an activity the Council participates in on an annual basis.
- *Access Across America* pooled fund study, led by MnDOT, provides locally focused accessibility data sets and reports from the Accessibility Observatory, as well as funding a set of Council-directed accessibility analyses that focus on specific analytical needs with the University Accessibility Observatory.
- *Applied Research in Transportation (ART) Program*, led by the Center for Transportation Studies (CTS), began in 2025 as a pilot to address time-sensitive research questions in a six-to-twelve-month timeframe. To reinforce the applied nature of the program, ART projects must directly address a current process, document, or policy need.