

Metropolitan Council approves more projects for stimulus funding

Written by
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ST. PAUL—June 10, 2009--The Metropolitan Council today approved more metro area transportation projects for federal stimulus funding. The Council action marks the final allocation of about \$250 million in stimulus funding for transportation projects in the metro area. An additional \$70.6 million has been targeted for transit.

Today's allocation includes \$59 million for 32 city and county road projects throughout the region. Some of the larger projects include:

- Replace Lowry Avenue bridge over the Mississippi River
- Reconstruct pedestrian bridge over TH65 in Columbia Heights
- Realign and widen county highways 10 and 101 in Maple Grove
- Reconstruct Akron Avenue in Rosemount
- Construct bridge and retaining walls for the CR83 overpass of I-35 in Washington County
- Reconstruct pedestrian bridge and staircase tower near Wabasha Street in St. Paul.

The allocation includes nearly \$8 million for 10 transportation enhancement projects, including bike and pedestrian projects. Among them are improvements on trails in St. Paul, Arden Hills, Carver County, Coon Rapids and Maplewood, and rehabilitation of the Bryant Avenue Bridge over Minnehaha Creek in Minneapolis.

The allocation also includes \$38 million for state projects in the metro area, including improvements to I-94 from the Crow River in Rogers to I-494 in Maple Grove, and I-35W between Arden Hills and Blaine.

In April, the Metropolitan Council approved the first round of transportation projects for federal stimulus funding, including the \$86 million extension of Highway 610 in northern Hennepin County. The April allocation amounted to about \$145 million of state and regional stimulus funds.

"We are working to allocate these funds as quickly as possible," said Council Chair Peter Bell. "Fortunately, we have a good process and a long history of allocating federal funds, which helped us identify and review projects. Our objectives for stimulus funds were to preserve and create jobs, while also addressing regional needs.

"We will continue to be vigilant about making sure these projects proceed in a timely manner, and we'll look for other stimulus funds that might become available to benefit the Twin Cities," Bell said.

Of the \$250 million the region is receiving from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for transportation projects, \$168 million goes to state projects in the metro area. More than \$80 million goes to city and county highway projects in the metro area, including transportation enhancements such as bike and pedestrian projects.

[See more information on all projects approved for stimulus funding](#) . (pdf)

All transportation projects in the region that receive federal funding must be reviewed and recommended by both the Transportation Advisory Board and Metropolitan Council.

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In addition to funds for road and enhancement projects, the Council will receive \$70.6 million in ARRA funds through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for metro area transit projects. Thus far, the Council has obligated \$52.8 million to purchase:

- 31 standard, 30 hybrid and 29 articulated bus replacements for the Metro Transit fleet (\$49.6 million)
- 15 hybrid and 1 standard bus replacements for the Metro Mobility fleet (\$1.8 million)
- 27 standard small buses for dial-a-ride services (\$1.4 million)

The Council intends to use the remaining \$17.8 million for eligible preventive maintenance costs included in the transit operating budget. This will help reduce the \$62.4 million shortfall in the operating budget that is projected for FY 2010-11.

The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Council runs the regional bus and light rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans regional parks and administers funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.