

1. INTRODUCTION

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a staged multi-year program of transportation improvements for the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. The TIP must be updated and approved at least every two years by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Governor in cooperation with the State and public transit operator. The Governor has designated the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) as the approval agent for the TIP. In non-attainment and maintenance areas for transportation related pollutants, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), as well as the MPO, must make a conformity determination on any new or amended TIPs in accordance with the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA) requirements and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conformity regulations.

The St. Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO), as the officially designated MPO, is responsible for development of the TIP. The APO accomplishes this task in cooperation with State agencies, local jurisdictions, St. Cloud Metro Bus, and other affected planning and implementing agencies. The responsibilities between the State, public transportation operators are clearly identified in written agreements (i.e. Memorandum of Understanding [MOU's]) with Mn/DOT and St. Cloud Metro Bus. The TIP development process begins within 90 days of the end of each program year. These agencies are represented on the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the APO. TAC membership consists of technical representatives from three counties, six municipalities, three townships (depending on their desires), St. Cloud Metro Bus, Mn/DOT and APO staff. A listing of implementing agencies, TAC membership, and an APO Planning Area map are included in Appendix A.

The FHWA and FTA must jointly find that this TIP is based on a continuing, comprehensive transportation planning process carried out cooperatively with MnDOT and St. Cloud Metro Bus. This finding is based, in part, on the Self-Certification included in the TIP.

SAFETEA LU now requires states, MPOs and transit providers to have a minimum of four (4) years represented in their TIP/STIP documents. This four (4) year program (FY 2008 to FY 2011) is represented in this TIP document for Mn/DOT District 3 projects in the APO area, for St. Cloud Metro Bus projects and for local Federal projects. The St. Cloud APO local Federal projects are programmed on an every other year programming cycle. This allows the APO TIP to be on a 5-year program (next year: 2009-2013) every other year, which allows for consideration of programming larger projects. The four or five year programming period is consistent with the capital improvement programs of local implementing agencies. It also provides an adequate time-frame for programming projects from the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area 2030 Transportation Plan (the Plan) and various APO project development studies.

The TIP includes a list of all federal transportation projects, or identified phases of federal projects within the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area consistent with the Plan and proposed for funding under Title 23, USC, or the Federal Transit Act. For informational purposes, the TIP also includes all regionally significant projects regardless of the funding source.

As a management tool for monitoring the progress of implementing the Plan, the TIP identifies criteria and a process for prioritizing implementation of the transportation projects and any changes in priorities from previous TIPs. It includes a list of major projects from the previous TIP that were implemented and identifies any significant delays in the planned implementation of other projects. A list of the previous TIP projects and their status can be found in Appendix E.

Since the City of St. Cloud is considered a "maintenance area" for Carbon Monoxide (CO), this TIP is required to include an Air Quality Conformity Determination Report for programmed projects. The APO planning area map in Appendix A illustrates the maintenance area boundaries.

The APO affords reasonable opportunities for the public and other interested parties to comment on the proposed and approved TIP. Public meeting notices are published and the TIP document is made readily available for review and comment. Appendix B contains a copy of the Public Information Meeting notices published in the St. Cloud Times, as well as the Affidavit of Publication for each meeting. The Public Participation element of the Plan details current and proposed methods for facilitating public input. To aid in the public involvement process the Draft 2008-2011 TIP was available on the St. Cloud APO website (www.stcloudapo.org). Once approved, the Final 2008-2011 TIP replaces the Draft TIP.

The TIP public involvement process was consistent with the APO's recently updated public involvement plan (updated for SAFETEA-LU compliance). The process provided citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to comment on the TIP. During the process, the APO also consulted with Indian Tribal governments and Federal land management agencies, to the extent practicable, on documented TIP processes.

This TIP is financially constrained by year and includes a financial plan that demonstrates which projects are to be implemented using existing and anticipated revenue sources, while the existing transportation system is being adequately maintained and operated. The financial plan was developed by the APO in cooperation with Mn/DOT, St. Cloud Metro Bus, and local jurisdictions who provided the APO with their historic transportation expenditures and forecasted transportation revenue. Only projects for which funds can reasonably be expected to be available are included in the

TIP. In developing the financial plan, the APO took into account all projects and strategies funded under Title 23, USC, and the Federal Transit Act, other federal funds, local sources, State assistance, and private participation.

This TIP also includes an environmental justice evaluation to determine if programmed projects will have a disproportionate impact on minority or low-income populations, consistent with the 1994 Executive Order 12898.