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2010 Innovations Awards Application

Deadline: March 1, 2010

ID # (assigned by CSG): **10-MW-21MN**

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Minnesota

Assign Program Category (applicant): Infrastructure and Economic Development – Transportation

1. Program Name: Minnesota Urban Partnership Agreement
2. Administering Agency: Minnesota Department of Transportation
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9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The Minnesota Urban Partnership Agreement is collaboration between state, regional and local government to provide more transportation choices and produce less traffic congestion on Interstate 35W in Minneapolis through a combination of technology, transit, road pricing and telecommuting. The partnership allows agencies to work together to leverage federal dollars, keep costs low and produce meaningful results.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

September 2009 (traveler information, signal retiming, HOV to optional priced toll lane conversion);
December 2009 (bus lanes, signage bus shelters, transit stations, park and ride lots, transit signal priorities, real time signs) and June 2009 (results only work environment telecommuting program).

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

Minnesota was awarded an Urban Partnership Agreement grant for its proposal to improve traffic congestion on the Interstate 35W corridor. The intent was to help improve traffic flow between downtown Minneapolis and the southern suburbs, and to promote innovative strategies to reduce traffic congestion in other urban areas.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

Winter 2007: Collaborative formed to submit regional application to Federal UPA program
August 2007: Region notified of grant award. Grant award requires legislation to be passed by May 12th 2008 in order to receive funds and requires substantial project delivery by September 2009
May 11th 2008: Minnesota legislature passes required legislation and appropriates matching State funds
August 2008: Projects begin construction phase
September 2009: Highway and some transit projects meet federal deadlines for completion, additional transit projects openings are extended to December in order to coordinate service openings
December 2009: Major transit projects open to public use
Spring 2010: Telework goals exceed federal performance requirements
October 2010: Final piece of program will be completed, on schedule, when the I-35W/Highway 62 Crosstown reconstruction project finishes its four-year duration and the tolling is extended through the project area.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

Minnesota's UPA is a comprehensive approach to reducing traffic congestion in a targeted area by maximizing the use of existing highway capacity and providing transit advantages. This is accomplished through a combination of congestion pricing approaches coupled with relatively substantial investments in transit, expansion of telecommuting through a public-private partnership model, targeted bottleneck removal, operational enhancements and the application of innovative technologies.

14. What were the program's start-up costs?

The total project cost was \$183.5 million, with \$133.3 million in Federal dollars and \$50.2 million in State funds. The funds have been distributed across 24 projects.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

The annual operating cost for tolling on I-35W (optional toll lanes with variable pricing and electronic payment) is about \$1 million. The cost is part of a larger contract that includes the existing HOT facilities on I-394 West of Minneapolis. Operating costs for additional bus fleet services and transit and highway technology operating costs are to be determined.

16. How is the program funded?

Minnesota's UPA funding is a combination of Federal grant dollars and state matching funds.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

Yes: 2008 Legislature, Chapter 306 SF 3058
(<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/?year=2008&type=0&doctype=Chapter&id=306>)

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

Traffic Operations

Ramp metering
Signal operations
Incident management
Electronic message boards
In-pavement LED lighting

Tolling

Electronic, dynamically priced (demand-based) optional toll lanes
Toll lane extensions

Priced dynamic shoulders lanes (PDSL)
Active lane management technologies

Transit

Bus rapid transit service
Park and ride facilities
“Transit advantage” bypass lane/ramp
Contra-flow transit lanes

Technology

Arterial and freeway traffic management
Under pavement loop detectors
Overhead traffic cameras
Real time bus information signs
Transit signal priority

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator’s name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

Not altogether. In December 2006, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued a Federal Register Notice soliciting cities to apply for Urban Partnership status and promising that the selected cities with the most aggressive congestion-relief programs would receive priority consideration. In August 2007, the Secretary of Transportation, Mary Peters, announced five final urban partners: Miami, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New York City, San Francisco, and Seattle. Initially, a total of \$853 million in Federal discretionary grants for these partners was also announced. Subsequently, New York City was unable to meet the terms of their agreement and, therefore, no longer able to participate in the program.

Minnesota’s Urban Partnership Agreement project does, however, stand apart in the depth and breadth of its use of four complementary and synergistic strategies (referred to as the "4Ts") to relieve urban congestion: tolling, transit, telecommuting, and technology.

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20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

As stated above, Urban Partnership Agreement projects exist in Florida, California and Washington state. Minnesota’s project is unique in that it is led by the state transportation department, includes partners representing all levels of government and delivers a broader, more comprehensive approach

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

No, there is one remaining construction contract which is on schedule but will be complete in fall 2010

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program’s effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

The project has been operational for six months and there has been a reduction in congestion on I-35W. Users of the corridor now have more choices in their commute as transit service and park and ride capacity has substantially increased and they have the choice to pay an optional toll to avoid congestion when they want.

The collaborative working relationship among all levels of government was critical and unique to delivering the program on a very short timeline.

A con to how the program was delivered was that it developed on a fast timeline and was spread across 24 projects. This made it difficult to demonstrate to the public the overall strategy of linking all projects to the one goal of reducing congestion in an innovative way. The public tended to see each of the individual projects as a standalone effort because that is the normal way they experience a transportation project.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The locally funded telecommuting element of the Urban Partnership Agreement has grown and been refined to focus on expanding upon the successful Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE) program, where employers agree to evaluate employee results, in lieu of requiring physical presence at the worksite at specific times, and provide employees the flexibility to telecommute or shift their hours to avoid congested commutes. Approximately 75 percent of Best Buy's 4,500 corporate office employees participate in ROWE. Large employers in the priced corridor (the overall region is home to 20 Fortune 500 companies and 33 Fortune 1000 companies) are targets for participation, with the goal of reducing 500 daily peak-period trips through the corridor.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

Challenges exist in identifying, integrating and calibrating programs and services to achieve low-cost, high-benefit results. A unique level of collaboration of partners representing different levels of government and multiple jurisdictions is required. In addition, public and political support for toll lanes may be low or non-existent. Minnesota overcame this challenge via an optional toll lane, where solo drivers can use the carpool or HOV lane for a fee or remain in the free, general purpose lanes.

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