

PRIORITY PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS

March 2005

- *Secretary of DOT solicits nominations from Governors, Metropolitan Planning Organizations and airport authorities.*
- *Office of the Secretary assembles DOT team of project evaluators from each modal office; FHWA leads Project Review Team (PRT).*
- *PRT reviews each nomination submitted and contacts each project sponsor and DOT field office to gather additional project information.*
- *Evaluation findings are summarized and PRT recommends a “short” list of projects for further information and input.*
- *PRT contacts key federal agency field offices for input and perspective on proposed priority project delays, issues, coordination, stewardship opportunities, etc.*
- *PRT provides a summary of all nominations to the Secretary and provides input based on its technical review of the project information.*
- *Secretary and DOT Leadership team evaluate nominations based on wide range of factors.*
- *Secretary selects priority projects for Task Force oversight.*

PRIORITY PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS

March 2005

Priority Project List Selection Criteria

Supplemental Information

DOT SELECTION CRITERIA

1) *National/Regional Significance*

Evidence of meeting this criterion:

- Project meets DOT mode definitions of national/regional significance:
 - FAA: Identified airport or project of national or regional significance.
 - FHWA: Highway project that is part of the Interstate or National Highway System.
 - FTA: Transit project that is a major element of a regional transit network.
- Nominator provides information bearing on national/regional significance:
 - Purpose and need demonstrates national/regional significance.
 - Project information shows national security connection.
 - Project information shows interstate/international trade connection.
 - Project information indicates potential for addressing identified national/regional capacity problems.
 - Project information indicates potential for extraordinary safety improvements.
 - Project information demonstrates innovation of national significance.
 - Project information indicates important interconnectivity of currently operating transportation systems.

Supplemental information to solicit from the nominator or funding agency:

- Views of the USDOT funding agency concerning national/regional significance based primarily on the first item above.
- Supplemental information from the nominator bearing on any of the above items.
- Estimates of project implementation costs and fiscal viability to provide a sense of project scale, feasibility and support.

2) *State/Local Support*

Evidence of meeting this criterion:

- The project is in an established financing program (TIP, STIP, aviation system plan).
- A strategy for obtaining financing has been fully developed.
- Letters of support or governmental resolutions indicating support are a matter of record.
- The planning history of the project indicates a high level of public involvement and State/local governmental support.
- For non-State projects, the governor has expressed support.

Supplemental information to solicit from the nominator or funding agency:

- The extent of support in projects affecting multiple local jurisdiction.
- Whether or not State/local governments have veto authority over the project; if yes, the views of the relevant parties.

(continued)

PRIORITY PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS

March 2005

Priority Project List Selection Criteria

Supplemental Information *(continued from page 2)*

3) *Delay Attributable to Federal Agency Issues*

Evidence of meeting this criterion:

- The project history demonstrates that actual delay has already occurred as a result of Federal environmental reviews.
- The project history demonstrates a high likelihood of future Federal interagency disagreements.
- The project involves unsettled policy issues that are frequently associated with substantial delay.
- The project is novel in terms of issues, scale, process and/or approach, suggesting a high probability of delay due to adopting a new mindset.
- The project has a high probability of yielding important lessons learned for assisting other projects or national policy development/refinement or process reinvention.

Supplemental information to solicit from the nominator, funding agency or other Federal agency:

- Accounting of the length, nature and assumed cause of delays to date.
- Track record of relationship issues among Federal agencies involved in the project, with emphasis on the history of delays on similar projects.
- Explanation of the policy issues involved and how related to project delay.
- Explanation of how project novelty is likely to result in delay.
- Rationale for how this project can help future projects.

PRIORITY PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS

March 2005

Priority Project List Selection Criteria

Additional Considerations

1) *Potential for Exemplary Environmental Stewardship*

Projects that demonstrate a high potential for environmental stewardship will receive higher consideration than comparable projects without such potential. This could involve innovative mitigation, environmental enhancement measures, partnerships with other agencies or conservation organizations, or process innovations that show a stewardship benefit.

2) *Project Mix*

A mix of projects reflecting a variety of circumstances is desirable. This mix could reflect:

- Different modes (aviation, highway, transit, intermodal, etc.).
- Geographic diversity (parts of the country, urban vs. rural).
- Issues that ensure involvement of all agencies that are members of the Interagency Task Force.

3) *Likelihood of Success*

Selected projects should have a high likelihood of success. This relates to the Federal officials being in a position to craft a solution. If the solution appears to be beyond their grasp (e.g., current Federal law would need to be changed or resolution is primarily needed at the State or local level), then the project is not a strong candidate for this venue. Projects will be given consideration regardless of their stage in the approval process. For projects early in the process, greater attention will be paid to problem prevention potential. For projects late in the process, greater attention will be paid to problem solving potential.

4) *Consequences of Inaction*

Projects with a serious consequence associated with inaction will receive higher consideration than comparable projects without such consequences. The nominator should be allowed to make a case for the consequences of inaction in any way deemed relevant, but it could relate to impending catastrophic failure; mobility, safety, national security benefits that would be denied to our citizens; financial hardship to a State or local government; or opportunities missed for creating a new positive way of doing business.

5) *Other Venues for Issue Resolution*

Projects that have already experienced delay will be given higher consideration if State and local venues for issue resolution have been exhausted. (This will not apply to projects for which conflict avoidance/problem prevention is the goal, rather than dispute resolution/problem solving.)

6) *Support for Administration Initiatives*

Projects that support specific Administration initiatives (e.g. New Freedom initiative) will be given higher consideration than comparable projects that do not support such initiatives.

The Project Review Team will solicit supplemental information relating to each of the above items as appropriate for allowing nominators to make their case and for affected Federal agencies to provide clarifying information.