



## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Unfunded Capital Needs Working Group  
**FROM:** John Swanson, Plan Development and Support Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Promoting regional priorities in the project selection processes of the TPB's member jurisdictions  
**DATE:** March 10, 2016

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This memo describes a proposal to develop a system that the TPB can use to promote the consideration of regional priorities in project selection processes at the local, subregional, and state levels.

## **BACKGROUND**

Last fall, during the finalization of the 2015 CLRP Amendment, TPB members expressed a general sentiment that regional priorities and goals did not appear to be adequately reflected in CLRP projects and in the plan as a whole. Members expressed general dissatisfaction with the forecast performance of the future transportation system in relation to regional goals. Some members suggested that in the future, the TPB should establish a process to score or rank CLRP project submissions in relation to regional goals and priorities as identified in the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.

The TPB convened a special work session on January 20 to discuss ways in which the board can promote regional priorities at many levels of project development. At that meeting, participants agreed to the following recommendations offered by Tim Lovain, TPB chairman, and Kanti Srikanth, TPB staff director:

1. Recognize and leverage the work of the already established Unfunded Capital Needs Working Group.
2. Redefine the TPB's long-range plan to include funded (constrained) and unfunded projects.
3. Keep abreast of project development processes at all levels.
4. Seek to influence project development at all levels.
5. Encourage project evaluation and development processes to incorporate regional considerations.

The first two of these recommendations entail changes in the TPB's long-range planning process. These recommendations are consistent with the scope of work approved by the Unfunded Capital Needs Working Group last November, which will lead to the identification of a set of unfunded regional priority projects reflecting regional goals. The selection of such unfunded projects will provide the TPB with opportunities for enhanced input at the state and local levels during earlier stages in the project development process well before new projects are submitted for the "constrained" element of the long-range plan.

In contrast, recommendations 3-5 will not change the regional planning process, but will call upon the TPB to be more cognizant and active in project development and selection activities at the local,

subregional and state levels. The remainder of this memo provides recommendations for implementing recommendations 3-5.

## **PROPOSAL**

This proposal is premised upon a fundamental fact underlying the TPB's current long-range planning process: By the time a project is submitted for the CLRP, it is already well advanced in the project development process. Typically, projects submitted for the CLRP have already undergone extensive planning activities and have been through a process of prioritization and funding identification at the state and/or local levels. If the TPB wishes these projects to reflect and promote regional goals and priorities, it must find ways to influence project development and selection well before submissions reach the CLRP.

Staff proposes to use the following means to document local, subregional, and state project selection processes and seek to ensure that regional policies and priorities are considered in those processes:

### **1. *Research and document project selection processes***

Staff will gather information through written questionnaires and telephone interviews on the project selection processes used by local, state, regional transportation agencies. This research will likely address the following questions:

- What are the goals, priorities, or outcomes that the projects are intended to advance?
- How are the projects evaluated against these goals, priorities, or outcomes – qualitatively, quantitatively or a combination?
- How does the quantitative evaluation process, if used, work? What role does qualitative evaluation play in selecting projects?
- How is consensus reached on a package of selected projects?
- Does project selection currently include any explicit consideration of regional policies or priorities?

The gathered information will be condensed in narrative descriptions that will be featured on the TPB's Hub website ([www.transportationplanninghub.org](http://www.transportationplanninghub.org)). In addition, the information will be synthesized in tables or on spreadsheets.

### **2. *Develop a set of regional priorities for project selection at all levels***

Consistent with the TPB Vision and using its Regional Transportation Priorities Plan document, the TPB will develop a specific set of regional outcomes that the TPB considers to be regional priorities for projects to address. These outcomes would serve as the project evaluation metrics that would be considered by the TPB member jurisdictions and agencies as they select projects for development and funding considerations.

One of the ways of identifying the above set of regional project priority metrics would be to use the results of the performance outcome of its latest CLRP (2015) and identify specific performance outcomes that the board finds to be deficient. These "CLRP performance deficiencies" are what the TPB would promote for use as part of the project selection process by

the member jurisdictions and transportation agencies.

The above work will also serve to implement the second recommendation (above) agreed upon during the January 20, 2016 TPB work session (“Redefine the TPB’s long-range plan to include funded [constrained] and unfunded projects”), which will require the development of a set of unfunded projects for inclusion in the region’s long-range transportation plan. Again, the development of this plan of unfunded priority projects was part of the scope of work approved by the Unfunded Capital Needs Working Group last November.

### **3. *Develop a systematized process for providing regional input to local and state project selection***

Working with the staffs of TPB member jurisdictions and agencies, TPB staff will develop a process for the TPB and its staff to use in conducting outreach to local, subregional and state agencies. This process will use a variety of outreach methods to pro-actively foster communication with TPB members across the region. But recognizing the TPB’s limited resources, the process will also be strategic and targeted.

Based upon the steps described above, the TPB will identify a plan for how the board wishes to convey its priorities to member jurisdictions. This plan may include the following components:

- *Provide written information to all members.* On a regular basis, the TPB may convey information in writing about regional priorities to all local, subregional and state boards that are involved in transportation project selection.
- *Develop a calendar of activities.* On an annual basis, TPB staff will develop a calendar of major planning activities that are underway throughout the region, which the TPB may seek to inform.
- *Make presentations to decision-making bodies.* On a regular basis, TPB staff will identify a list of decision-making bodies that could/should be contacted to receive presentations on regional priorities.
- *Seek to inform regular programming activities and events.* Selected annual activities that occur on an annual basis are particularly appropriate venues in which to share information about regional priorities. These include MDOT’s Annual Tour, VDOT’s SYIP development process, NVTAs’s programming, and others.
- *Seek to include regional priorities in scoring and ranking systems.* The TPB may seek to integrate regional priorities and needs with the project evaluation criteria used in local, sub-regional and state level project prioritization processes (qualitative and or quantitative).

## **NEXT STEPS**

The working group will discuss this proposal at their meeting on March 16. TPB staff welcomes all comments and suggestions regarding its implementation.