

MEMO

To: CA-MPO Policy Board
From: Chip Boyles, Executive Director
Date: July 22, 2020
Re: 2022 Smart Scale MPO Project Selection Process

Purpose: To identify and fully vet with equitable and engaged community participation, transportation projects to be submitted for 2022 Smart Scale consideration.

Background: The MPO has since the beginning of Smart Scale received recommendations for Smart Scale application in two methods:

1. The MPO Technical Committee recommends projects to be reviewed and recommended to the MPO Citizen's Advisory Committee for review and to the MPO Policy Board and local government for final consideration; and
2. Receive recommendations directly from the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County for the MPO to apply on their behalf

During the 2020 application process, one project, the Route 20 Bike/Ped Path, experienced the need for additional community engagement and design review beyond the review provided in the past. A number of citizens and interested stakeholder groups had not been fully engaged in the preliminary conceptual designs and project options. The result was a conceptual project that was not adequately vetted by the public. Following the Smart Scale and MPO Policy Board protocol, the project did not receive approval to be submitted for funding consideration through Smart Scale. Because of the timing of this, the MPO will be asked to submit only three projects for their four available submissions.

Issues: The MPO Policy Board needs to determine a way to identify priority projects much earlier to be considered for future Smart Scale submissions. To be included in this selection process, determining which possible projects require any additional community engagement or design or local match and which may require only minor community engagement. The MPO would not have resources available to fully engage four or more projects for each Smart Scale round.

Action Needed: MPO staff recommends that Smart Scale selection procedures be drafted that will help to prioritize transportation projects for Smart Scale consideration; determine which priority projects require additional community engagement and/or design and/or local match; determine how to address direct project requests by the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. These procedures should be in place by February, 2021 when current Smart Scale scores are expected.

Sample procedures:

Once Smart Scale scoring is provided from the most recent submission round, usually in February, present current scores to the MPO Policy Board, CTAC and Technical Committee. Have the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County and the Technical Committee and CTAC recommend priority projects to the MPO Policy Board. These recommendations will include documentation for prioritization, recommendation for increased community engagement and a priority scoring of submitted projects. By March/April MPO Policy Board will consider projects to consider for submission and type of community engagement.

Projects, no more than two, that require extensive community engagement, will have an advisory panel appointed by the MPO Policy Board to be staffed and facilitated by MPO staff. (an example is the Hydraulic and 29 Advisory Panel, but at a much smaller scale) This panel will meet regularly to review the objectives of the project and possible options, to include opportunities and threats of the transportation and land use changes of the potential project. Updates will be provided to the Technical Committee, CTAC and MPO Policy Board. A project recommendation should be provided to the MPO committees prior to March before an April preliminary Smart Scale submission.

Concerns:

1. Will require the MPO and local governments to identify priority projects much earlier than previously
2. Limits the ability of the MPO to apply on behalf of the local government
3. Does not have resources for engineering and design consulting. The MPO only has resources for planning and facilitation.

Benefits:

1. Improved community engagement beyond what is required to submit Smart Scale applications
2. Early consideration of match funding to improve project scores
3. Identification of design/engineering funding to assist in application development

The MPO staff can have draft procedures for review at the September MPO Policy Board meeting. If an approved procedure can be adopted in November, local governments will be notified of the changes and timeline to submit recommended projects for the 2022 application period.