

MEMO

To: CA-MPO Policy Board
From: Chip Boyles, Executive Director
Date: July 22, 2020 REVISED September 8, 2020 REVISED December 1, 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 and future Smart Scale funding application consideration.

Background: SmartScale is the Virginia Department of Transportation's application process to fund transportation projects within the Commonwealth. Applications are accepted every two years and are qualified and ranked based upon benefit of the project and available funding. According to local, regional or state benefit of the project, projects may apply for either VDOT District Funds or the more competitive Statewide funds. Normally, local governments, Planning District Commissions and MPO's may apply for up to four projects per round. VDOT presents the ranked projects to the Commonwealth Transportation Board who then reviews and approves projects to be funded in the Six Year Improvement Plan of Virginia. 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 for past project applications. To meet application submission deadlines, 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 in 2020 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 the following Smart Scale selection procedures be approved that will help to prioritize transportation projects for Smart Scale consideration and apply ONLY to

projects to be submitted by the MPO; 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. Local governments and the TJPDC will determine procedures for their own direct project application submissions to VDOT's SmartScale. MPO submitted project procedures should be in place by February, 2021.

Recommended procedures:

Once Smart Scale scoring is provided from the most recent submission round, usually in January following the most recent submissions, MPO staff will present current scores to the MPO Policy Board, CTAC and Technical Committee.

CTAC and the MPO Tech Committee will review to recommend projects to be considered by the MPO Policy Board for the next Smart Scale round.

Recommendations will be shared with the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. Charlottesville and Albemarle may support these recommendations and/or offer their own projects for consideration by the MPO Policy Board. Projects to be considered must be submitted to the MPO Policy Board by May of the same year.

CTAC and Tech Committee will review and consider the requested projects and will provide a list of up to five recommended projects to the MPO Policy Board.

In that recommendation, projects will be prioritized as major or minor projects. No more than two projects may be considered major. The MPO Policy Board may approve up to two projects as major.

Major projects will require an appointed advisory panel to advise on project development and community engagement to include specific online information (web site), similar but smaller than the Hydraulic and 29 Advisory Panel. It is likely outside consulting will be required to develop technical options. External design consulting may be provided by VDOT or through local government contract, as funding is available. Each advisory panel will be appointed by the MPO Policy Board and staffed by the TJPDC staff. Panel meetings should begin in October. 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.

Minor projects will not require an advisory panel and will rely solely on VDOT, MPO Technical Committee and VDOT consultants for technical expertise. TJPDC staff will coordinate public engagement through grouped engagement meetings and CTAC meetings meeting SmartScale requirements.

The procedures of this policy may be waived at any time by the MPO Policy Board for Minor or Major Projects should local government projects or Major Project development dictate alternate project application submissions.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

January '21	CTB receives VDOT scored projects
March '21	Project Scores from VDOT presented to MPO Committees
May '21	New projects must be submitted to CTAC and Tech Committee by local governments, transit agencies, or other interested groups for consideration as MPO Smart Scale applications. All submissions must meet minimum SmartScale requirements for consideration.
June '21	Award of previous project funding by CTB
July '21	New projects are recommended by CTAC and Tech Committee to MPO Policy Board.
Sept '21	MPO Policy Board approves projects to be considered, differentiates between Major & Minor
Nov '21	MPO Policy Board appoints Advisory Panels. (May occur in September if needed)
Jan– June'22	Panels Meet (may begin in October if needed)
March '22	Local government and TJPDC project applications due to MPO Policy Board for consideration of support resolutions
April '22	Letters of Intent due to VDOT
May '22	MPO Policy Board considers resolutions for projects to submit for funding MPO Policy Board considers support of local government and TJPDC project applications
Aug '22	Smart Scale Applications due

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 limited planning and facilitation.
4. Will require more than one cycle to meet local government Capital Improvement Plan deadlines for funding toward identified projects.
5. This process will become a major funded program for the MPO's VDOT provided annual funding and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

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
4. Major role of CTAC becomes consideration and recommendation of proposed SmartScale projects