Summary of Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) Staff Recommended Changes to the SMART SCALE Program as presented to the Commonwealth Transportation Board through July 19, 2023

Disclaimer: This list was developed by CA-MPO staff as a summary of proposed changes for the purposes of organizing feedback. Full discussions informing the development of each of these recommendations can be found by viewing the discussions at the CTB meetings.

1. The Commonwealth Transportation Board is considering reducing the application cap for all entities eligible to submit applications. For Tier 1 entities, which is all of the submitting entities in the CA-MPO and TJPDC region, the application cap would be reduced from 4 applications to 2 applications.

2. To facilitate application readiness at time of submission, the Commonwealth Transportation Board is considering processes that will require final applications to be complete prior to submission. This would mean that all resolutions, approvals, reports, detailed project schedules, cost estimates, and other required attachments would need to be completed prior to the submission of the final application and could not be added later. The CTB is also considering changing the terminology for the pre-screening conditional review from "conditional screen in" if a pre-application indicates deficiencies in application readiness at the time the pre-application is submitted to "conditional screen out."

3. To address project cost overruns and scheduling delays for locally administered projects that have received funding through SMART SCALE, the Commonwealth Transportation Board is considering tying consensus funding decisions to entity performance in project delivery.

4. To better capture the future impacts of project implementation on congestion impacts, the Commonwealth Transportation Board is considering using 10-year future growth to determine congestion benefit scores instead of current congestion conditions.

5. MPOs, PDCs, and transit agencies are only eligible to submit applications through the High Priority Program (HPP). Localities are eligible to submit applications through both the District Grant Program and the HPP. To address concerns that the High Priority Program (HPP) is being used to implement small projects (projects with cost estimates < $10 million) that don't have meaningful impacts on the improvement of Corridors of Statewide Significance or Regional Networks, the Commonwealth Transportation Board is considering limiting projects that are eligible to receive funding through the HPP to the following types:
    o   New Capacity Highway
    o   Managed Lanes
    o   New or Improved Interchanges
    o   New or Improved Passenger Rail Stations or Service
    o   Freight Rail Improvements
    o   Fixed Guideway Transit

6. To address the concern about small projects (projects with a cost-estimate of < $10 million) being funded through the High Priority Program (HPP), the Commonwealth Transportation Board is considering adjustments to how HPP funding is allocated. The current funding steps are as follows:

- o Step 1 allocates each VDOT construction district's grant program funding on a district-wide basis.
- o Step 2 allocates HPP funding on a district-wide basis for projects that would've been funded through each district's grant program if they had been eligible to be submitted through that program.
- o Step 3 allocates HPP funding on a statewide basis.

The proposed change would eliminate the current Step 2 and would move straight from Step 1 to Step 3 shown above.

7. SMART SCALE includes "land use coordination" as a scoring criteria in the evaluation of applications. The goal of the land use coordination measure, as stated in the SMART SCALE Technical Guide, is to "improve the consistency of the connection between local comprehensive plan goals for transportation-efficient land use and transportation infrastructure design, multi-modal accommodation, and system operations." Concerns raised about the current use of the land use score is that it accounts for where a project is located, not expected project outcomes. There is also concern that the land use score has disproportionately driven the types of projects that are selected for funding.

To address these concerns, the Commonwealth Transportation Board is considering a change to eliminate land use as a standalone score. Instead, the Commonwealth Transportation Board is considering an adjustment to use the land use scoring factor as a multiplier - the calculated land use benefit would be converted to a multiplier and would be multiplied against the other calculated project benefits to enhance overall project benefits determined by the other scoring factors.

8. To account for the elimination of land use as a standalone score, the weights for the other SMART SCALE scoring factors would need to be adjusted. The Commonwealth Transportation Board is considering the following revisions to the factor weighting:

Current Weighting

Factor	Safety	Congestion	Accessibility	Land Use	Economic Development	Environment	
Type A	5%	45%	15%	20%	5%	Up to -5 Points	10%
Type B	20%	15%	20%	15%	20%		10%
Type C	25%	15%	15%	10%	25%		10%
Type D	30%	10%	10%	10%	30%		10%

Staff Recommended Weighting

Factor	Safety	Congestion	Accessibility	Land Use	Economic Development	Environment	
Type A	20% (+15%)	50% (+5%)	15%	Up to 100% Added	5%	Up to -5 Points	10%
Type B	25% (+5%)	25% (+10%)	20%		20%		10%
Type C	30% (+5%)	20% (+5%)	15%		25%		10%
Type D	40% (+10%)	10% (+0%)	10%		30%		10%

The impacts to Round 5 SMART SCALE project selection if all changes were in effect for the past round are summarized below (the CA-MPO region is area type B, the rest of the PDC is area type C):

All Solutions Scenario

Funding Scenario				Scoring		
HPP Eligibility	DGP Eligibility	Steps	Consensus	Factor Weighting	Typology	Methods

- **Considers modifications to Land Use and Congestion, HPP-Eligible Project Types, and Elimination of Step 2**
- **Total number of projects funded in urban is 49% versus 51% in rural**

The average total cost of funded projects raised from $15.1M to $21.8M

The average total request of funded projects raised from $10.1M to $13.9M (removes 39 projects)

For Principal Improvement Type

- **Bike & Ped -** 51 to 13
- **Highway -** 98 to 99
- **Bus Transit –** 3 to 1

For Area Type

- **A -** 39 to 29
- **B -** 34 to 26
- **C -** 23 to 14
- **D -** 56 to 44

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