



SMART SCALE Process Review Town Hall

Questions and Answers

Note: Similar questions are italicized and received responses that have been grouped together

Topic: Refine High-Priority Projects Program (HPP) Eligibility

- How do you define regionally significant? How are you addressing safety in HPP? How do you define new capacity projects?
 - Regionally significant - Covered in the slides before - as it stands today, the Virginia Code defines the *where* (RN and COSS), the proposal is for CTB to establish policy to add the *what* (by feature type) to define better what is regional or statewide significance.
 - New Capacity - Project would Include Features - Roadway on New Alignment, Add New Through Lanes(s), Managed Lane(s) (HOV/HOT/Shoulder)
 - Safety in HPP - reflected in the redistribution of Land Use weighting, every area type is proposed to increase the Safety Factor weighting. Safety-focused applications are applicant-driven, applying for projects targeting safety using performance-based identification and planning solutions.
- For the new HPP definition, will a new ramp that is part of a single loop interchange on Route 1 be an eligible interchange project?
 - In this example, it would be eligible under the new HPP definition as New Interchange on Non-Limited Access Facilities is an eligible Feature.
- Will operational improvements along important corridors be included under the new HPP guidelines?
 - At the CTB member's request in the October Board meeting, we are exploring different scenarios that could expand the HPP eligibility definition.

Topic: Tie consensus funding decisions to performance in delivering projects

- Please explain the mechanics of how the applicant's delivery history will be factored into the consensus scenario development.
 - See CTB resolution passed in October 2023 (Performance Policy for Locally Administered Projects), and we will post the link to the resolution - <https://www.ctb.virginia.gov/resources/2023/oct/res/8.pdf>
 - Per the action of the Board related to the Locality Sustained Performance Program, the members will consider local performance metrics during the development consensus funding scenario.
 - At the Board's discretion, this information could be used in final decisions related to project selection or administration.

Topic: Streamline the SMART Portal process by obtaining OIPI, VDOT, and DRPT approvals before submission

- How will the application requirements for the Pre-Application process change for Round 6 compared to Round 5?
 - The proposed streamlining of the SMART Portal process by obtaining OIPI, VDOT, and DRPT approvals prior to submission will provide checkpoints to ensure readiness requirements are communicated clearly and that documents are coordinated with VDOT staff in a timely manner.
 - For example, like filling out a required line item like your email, and you leave it blank you aren't allowed to submit.
 - During the pre-application phase, applicants will be provided with the document requirements for each selected feature as well as a list of VDOT staff who will review each document. The applicant must check a box acknowledging the document requirements and confirming that the documents will be provided in the full application to submit the pre-application.
 - Interchange improvement features will now require a draft or final IAR or OSAR to support the feature, with a signed LD-459 framework document provided with the pre-application. Interchange features which were part of a STARS or Pipeline study, submitted in Round 5, and screened in after Central Office review are excepted from this change for Round 6 only.

- We will work on portal workflows after Board action and provide pre-application and full application training to the applicant community.

Topic: Application Limit

- Have you considered waiting to implement the application cap until a future round of SS to see the effect of the other policy changes on the number and quality of applications? If yes, why are you continuing with this approach?
 - It is at the Board's discretion to implement a reduced application limit.
 - The revised staff recommendation introduced a middle tier covered in the October CTB Meeting.

Topic: General Process Review Questions

- How do you reconcile the concern that these changes will more likely revert CTB policy to fund "asphalt and concrete" road widening projects instead of a broad multimodal and multipurpose program?
 - The objective of the SMART SCALE process review was and is to assess and improve the overall process used to evaluate proposed projects and inform the CTB's decision as they select transportation projects. It is intended that the proposed staff recommendations will continue to support a broad range of multimodal solutions to transportation challenges throughout the Commonwealth.
- What considerations have been given to rural areas of the Commonwealth as the proposed changes look adverse for said rural localities?
- How will these proposed changes help "to level the playing field" for rural counties to participate in and be more successful in Smart Scale?
 - Land use as a modifier allows weighting points to be reassigned in all Area Types to factors such as safety - a factor that rural areas typically perform well in.
 - Additionally, the staff recommendation to eliminate Step 2 emphasizes cost-effectiveness by only considering the SMART SCALE score.

- When will OIPI's analysis of the Hynes/Kasprowicz alternative for SMART SCALE for Round 5 project be made available to the public?
 - Upon staff analysis and review by Secretary Miller, as noted at the CTB meeting, the proposed alternative by Mrs. Hynes and Mr. Kasprowicz will be distributed to the Board and posted at the CTB website.

Topic: Bike and Pedestrian

- How can you assure the public that SMART SCALE will continue to fund projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are beneficial to the environment, such as public transit, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and bicycle-and pedestrian-friendly shared use paths?
- How does modifying the evaluation criteria for consideration in a way that removes pedestrian and trail projects and prioritizes auto-oriented projects meet the key factors of Smart Scale of reducing congestion, improving safety, promoting efficient land use, and affecting the environment?
- Are there intentions of increasing the weighting for pedestrian, bike, and multimodal improvements to reduce the reliance on automobiles as a primary mode of transportation?
 - Land use as a modifier can increase weighting on the accessibility factor area. Improving access to non-single occupant vehicle modes like bus transit, rail transit, and bike/ped facilities is a key component of the Accessibility scoring process.
 - Weightings are not applied to Features or Principal Improvement Types, however, some Board members have requested a measure weighting adjustment within the Accessibility Factor Area.
 - A.1 is Increase in Access to Jobs, A.2 is Increase in Access to Jobs for Disadvantaged Populations, A.3 is Increase in Access to Multimodal Travel Options, which are currently weighted at A.1 at 60%, A.2 at 20%, A.3 at 20%. The proposed modification would be A.1 at 40%, A.2 at 20%, and A.3 at 40%, increasing the influence of multimodal projects on an application's final score.

Topic: VTrans

- Can we expand the definition of regional networks so that it may include at a minimum: one North/South corridor and one East/West corridor in non-MPO areas? A goal of the Statewide Multimodal Plan should likely also be to enable all communities in Virginia to compete for SMART Scale funding.
- Are there any additions or other changes related to the Corridors of Statewide Significance?
 - OIPI's Statewide Transportation Planning (STP) team is planning on providing an overview of the existing policies related to VTrans Travel Markets and VTrans Mid-term Needs at the December Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) meeting. The STP Team will make a point to share your comment and proceed according to the direction provided by the CTB. Please get in touch with Jitender Ramchandani, AICP, PMP, at jitender.ramchandani@oipi.virginia.gov or visit www.vtrans.org for other VTrans policies-related comments and suggestions.

Topic: Economic Development

- The proposed economic development changes seem to eliminate the Transportation Project Scaling Points (points for project being listed in Comp Plan/CEDS and projects located in economically distressed areas). Has any consideration been given to keeping these elements in the scoring methodology?
 - The elements within the Transportation Project Scaling Factor, alignment with locality planning and economic distress, have been incorporated into the proposed methodology in other ways.
 - The Site Tier level metric incorporates site alignment with the Comprehensive Plan, as sites must be identified as commercial or industrial in the Comprehensive Plan to advance to Tier 2 or higher.
 - Economic distress is incorporated into the funding metric. Statewide funding sources like VBRSP look to ensure all regions of the state realize job growth and reduce matching requirements in line with locality distress. The Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission also targets broad regions experiencing economic distress for funding.

- When will VEDP share a map or listing of the VBRSP Tiered Sites?
 - A full list of sites can be found on sites.vedp.org/virginia/site/. Certified sites are Tier 4 or Tier 5.
- What counts as a site visit? How is this cataloged? Physical site visits? Website visits?
 - Both physical and virtual site visits by active prospects are tracked.
- How does this methodology account for how advanced a site is in the site development process? i.e. “real planned development in the project corridor” as documented in the current policy guide?
 - This is accounted for by the Site Tier level metric, which tracks a site’s readiness to compete for economic development projects. Additional details can be found at vedp.org/vbrsp
- What is the historical projects model? Please provide a demonstration of how it calculates this value.
- This revised set of scoring criteria represents only one approach to economic development – focusing on large greenfield sites. Local economic development offices are not tracking site visits, nor are real estate agents sharing this information with local governments. This is not a realistic dataset to use for SMART SCALE.
 - The historic project's model regresses the location and site characteristics of a set of nationwide projects occurring since 2015 to estimate how many jobs and how much capital investment could be expected to be announced at a site. The acreage and latitude/longitude of a site are entered into the model, which then provides estimates for jobs and capital investment based on similar sites that have historically won projects. The model considers the size of sites, environmental features, and patterns of development surrounding the site.
 - Sites of all sizes and brownfield sites are entered into VirginiaScan, and so would be accounted for with this approach.
 - VEDP would provide its site visit dataset to OIPI to ensure an apples-to-apples comparison of visits across localities. Local economic development offices and governments would not be required to track any additional information.

- I would like more information on how economic development sites are added to the VirginiaScan database and what types of sites are eligible. My understanding is that the sites are entered by developers that are marketing their properties, not by locality staff. If this is the case, then there could be some concerns that the database will not be comprehensive since developers will only be adding sites if they believe it will support their marketing efforts.
 - The Virginia Scan database is currently managed by VEDP, locality and planning districts. The localities are primarily responsible for the local inventory. Developers and brokers do not have administrative access to the database. They must submit information to the appropriate locality. VEDP has proposed with the Smart Scale recommendation to provide access to additional users as necessary to ensure that the database captures ALL relevant sites.

Topic: General SMART SCALE questions not related to the Process Review

- Does SMART SCALE incorporate global best practices for street design, like that of World Bank endorse Global Street Design Guide?
<https://globaldesigningcities.org/publication/global-street-design-guide/>
 - The SMART SCALE program does not dictate design criteria. For roadway projects funded in SMART SCALE the project must adhere to the design process and criteria in VDOT's manuals and standards. VDOT design standards incorporate many national and international best practices related to complete streets and context-sensitive design.
- FHWA has developed new Crash Modification Factors for separated bicycle lanes. Are there plans to incorporate these into SMART SCALE scoring?
 - The CMF list is currently being reevaluated and no decisions have been made at this time. Applicants can anticipate the CMFs posted in the Resources section of the SMART SCALE Website when they are complete for Round 6.