

Livable Delaware Activity

Activity/Policy/Program Name: Prioritization Process for CIP Projects

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Purpose: To provide an organized way to figure out which projects to do since we don't have enough money to do them all in any single year.

Enabling Laws: 29 Del. C. § 8409 and 8419. The State Legislature mandated that DelDOT take on the responsibility for developing, prioritizing, and implementing transportation capital investment requirements for Delaware. The Council on Transportation (COT) was created by the Legislature as an oversight body whose members are appointed by the Governor. The COT is responsible for considering and approving, if appropriate, changes that DelDOT proposes for prioritizing and/or funding transportation projects.

The Federal Inter-modal Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), passed in 1990, strongly emphasized that Department of Transportation's (DOT) develop and utilize better management and planning techniques than they had in the past. Overall, the new legislation created a shift in national transportation policies from the "highway building era" toward one of "managing the transportation system" in a way that balanced mobility, accessibility, community concerns, long range land use, the environment, and fiscal constraints. It also required states to create long range plans and use them as the basis for managing and developing their respective systems. The Prioritization Process was developed with these objectives as the guiding mandate.

Policies: The Prioritization process is defined and described in a workbook. The workbook is, essentially, a user's guide that contains information needed to apply the Prioritization Process to a project being proposed for funding in DelDOT's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The process was adopted by the Council on Transportation and by both Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO).

History: In mid-1995 the Delaware Legislature and the COT directed DelDOT to review and prepare a revised CIP prioritization process. Following this review, the COT approved a complete revision to the methods and assumptions used in prioritizing capital expenses in March 1996. The revised system focused on 14 factors for use in measuring the benefits and merits of prospective projects through which a sequential ranking of all proposals could be made. The COT approval was on condition that DelDOT address two perceived shortcomings, a Benefit/Cost Ratio and a system of weighted factors be developed. Additionally, DelDOT was also directed by the Legislature to develop a priority process for other areas of the CIP as well. This process was initiated in the spring of 1997.

After using the revised system for a short period, it was found to be awkward and cumbersome because it required subjective judgement where data was not available. The use of High, Medium, and Low rankings also needed better definition.

By the fall of 1997, the Committee had reached a general consensus that the prioritization process should be further revised to make greater use of the existing data already collected within DelDOT and other agencies. It was decided that the factors used in the process should support the attainment of goals contained in Delaware's long-range plan. These modifications were made and the current system was adopted. The current prioritization process has evolved so that all major capital projects coming through the Pipeline Process will reflect the goals and themes found in the Statewide Long Range Plan and the Transportation Investment Areas Map.

Current Situation: The system is being used and is generally supported by the public and both MPOs.

Revisions/Actions Needed: The Prioritization process needs to be revised to replace the current Transportation Investment Areas designations with the designations in the state strategies map. The prioritization process is specifically designed to support and help realize the goals of "Shaping Delaware's Future" by giving extra credit to projects that are located in areas intended for development. In addition, when a TDR program is established, we will add language to the prioritization process to give priority to projects benefiting TDR Receiving Zones.

In addition, the Pipeline pool selection criteria needs to be revised to incorporate Livable Delaware's goals and strategies. This should be done by each pool manager and revised by the project development committee. By incorporating the revised strategies into each pool's criteria, projects that help us meet the goals should automatically rise to the top for funding in the annual CIP. The prioritization process will be a tool for achieving stated goals.

Resources Needed to Create/Revise: The resources required to make these revisions are all available within the Department's current staff.

Process for Creation/Revision: The Division of Planning will make the necessary modifications in terminology and reprint the workbook.

Schedule: Beginning in September, this effort will be completed in two (2) months.

Measures to Guide Progress: The simple measure will be the extent to which the Department projects are located in the appropriate investment area:

- Does the CIP match what's in the State Development map?
- Does the CIP show we used the Process?

Interactions or Inter-relationships with Other Agencies or Units of Government: This effort links directly to the two MPOs. It also links to the Delaware State Housing Authority and the Department of Agriculture in terms of supporting the efforts of these two agencies to carry out their respective missions.