

CDTC TIP Task Force: Meeting #3

Meeting Minutes

Date: April 19, 2023

Time: 1:00 - 2:30 pm

Attendees:

Name	Organization
Sandra Misiewicz	CDTC
Jacob Beeman	CDTC
Andrew Tracy	CDTC
Susan Barden	City of Saratoga Springs
Greg Wichser	NYSDOT Region 1
Kelley Kircher	NYSDOT Region 1
Kim Lambert	Saratoga County
Chris Wallin	City of Schenectady
Megan Quirk	CDTA
Mike Valentine	Saratoga County
John Scavo	Town of Clifton Park
Andrew Kreshik	City of Troy
Randy Milano	City of Albany
Steve Feeney	Schenectady County
Lisa Ramundo (Online)	Albany County

1) Welcome and Introduction

Jacob Beeman began the meeting with a discussion of the meeting agenda and reviewed the objective of the TIP Task Force:

Objective: To develop a TIP Policy Document that discusses recommended improvements to how the TIP is developed and managed. This document will then be brought to the Planning Committee for review and approval. Approval of this document will empower CDTC staff to prepare updates to the TIP application, evaluation, and programming processes in accordance with guidelines established by the TIP Task Force.

Caveat: Policies related to the updated regional transportation plan may require an amendment of the TIP Policy Document.

Jacob reviewed the anticipated TIP Task Force timeline. Meeting #4 will occur in June and will focus on finalizing the Draft TIP Policy Document.

Jacob presented the draft TIP Policy Document that was circulated for review to task force members. The document is organized into five sections: Application, Summary Table, Project Categories, B/C and Merit Evaluation, and General.

2) Draft TIP Policy Document Review

i. Applications – Feedback and Recommendations

Jacob presented a summary of the feedback received on the TIP application process from the task force, along with recommendations to be included in the TIP Policy Document. Recommendations included streamlining the online application process, reducing application length where able, and to allow more time for sponsors to submit applications.

Andrew Kreshik asked if consolidated projects need to be re-evaluated. Sandy responded that, in the past, this has only been done for major scope changes.

ii. Summary Tables and Fact Sheets - Feedback and Recommendations

Jacob presented a summary of feedback received relating to the summary tables and other TIP evaluation materials prepared for Planning Committee. Feedback received on the materials was very positive. One of the recommendations made relating to summary tables was to not display the sponsor priority, as this element is not part of the scoring process and often leads to confusion.

Mike Valentine stated that not showing priority may allow sponsors to adjust priority if needed. Greg Wichser suggested asking for high-medium-low priority instead of a numerical ranking, as this would allow them to properly rank last-minute applications. All in attendance concurred with not showing sponsor priority on the published summary tables.

iii. CDTC Project Categories – Feedback and Recommendations

Jacob presented feedback and recommendations relating to the TIP Project Categories. The categories may need to be re-worked to better align with Metropolitan Transportation Plan goals and federally mandated performance measures. The categories could also be re-worked to lessen confusion relating to preservation vs. non-preservation projects, and to ensure the Complete Streets treatments are included on roads in the appropriate context.

John Scavo asked if the categories were based on performance measures, would the applicant need to demonstrate how the project will contribute toward the performance goals. Jacob responded that the categories are intended to guide which questions are asked for which project types on the applications. Mike Valentine asked what the timeframe was for the next Metropolitan Transportation Plan update. Jacob stated that the next TIP solicitation is expected in Fall 2024, and the MTP will be in development at that time but not finalized until September 2025.

Chris Wallin asked how the project categories identified in the long-range plan will influence project selection. Sandy responded that, while all categories of projects are important, the plan should do a better job of prioritizing. Steve Feeney suggested that the Metropolitan Transportation Plan should allocate funding amongst priorities. Sandy responded that plans in the past had done this, and the intention is to resume this practice. Greg Wichser stated his support for aligning project categories with performance targets. Sandy added that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) will likely still be the newest legislation at the time of the next TIP update, and the TIP should reflect BIL priorities.

There was further discussion of preservation vs. non-preservation projects. Chris Wallin stated that the City of Schenectady does not do many pavement preservation projects due to cost. Federal Aid projects are more costly

than using CHIPS or other local funding sources. The Federal Aid requirements bloat project costs and make it ineffective to use federal aid on smaller projects. Greg Wichser concurred and added that Federal Aid projects have a floor for costs for design, inspection, and administrative overhead. Lisa Ramundo added that their design costs are higher on TIP projects than on non-TIP projects. Lisa asked if there was any way to get construction-only projects onto the TIP if they have been designed with non-federal funding. Greg Wichser responded that yes, Rensselaer County has done this in the past, but the design consultant must know that it will be a Federal Aid construction job.

iv. Benefit Cost & Merit Evaluation – Feedback and Recommendations

Jacob presented feedback relating to the benefit cost and merit evaluation process. Recommendations for streamlining include using only context-appropriate merit scores for each project category, similar to the recent BRIDGE-NY solicitation. Additional recommendations were to remove the user cost component of the B/C score and to continue to allow sponsors to swap funded projects based on internal priority.

Andrew Kreshik asked about the 50-50 ratio between the quantitative B/C score and the qualitative merit scores. Andrew Tracy responded that this ratio could be adjusted if helpful and could even differ for different project types. Andrew T. explained that the BRIDGE-NY scoring had three components, and the merit scores comprised 20 out of 100 points. Finding the right balance for each project type would be important. Steve Feeney asked about removing the user cost component. Andrew Tracy responded that the user cost was a minor component of the overall project benefits, less than 1% in all cases. It is a few cents per mile saved on vehicle wear-and-tear when a road is re-paved. Andrew T. explained that removing the user cost will not impact project rankings.

John Scavo stated that rural and urban highways have different needs and contexts, and that using a long list of merit scores can add cost without adding much benefit. John stated that having focused and fewer categories may help with scoring clarity and project scoping. Sandy added that CDTC will prepare TIP guidance for the next round of TIP solicitation.

v. General – Feedback and Recommendations

Jacob presented the remaining general recommendations, relating to continuing to encourage local members to submit all needs for funding and streamlining the application process to reduce burden on smaller communities. The task force concurred and there was no additional discussion.

3) Design Only Projects – NYSDOT Led Discussion

Greg Wichser stated that the 10-year rule has ended, allowing for design-only projects to be funded through the TIP. However, NYSDOT had concerns about this practice getting out of hand. The concern is that each design-only project will come back to the TIP table for construction funding, which will reduce the available funding for new projects during subsequent TIP updates. The intention of providing design-only funding was to help these projects be more competitive for all grant programs (i.e. other State and Federal competitive programs), not just TIP funding through CDTC.

Chris Wallin asked if the Schenectady County PEL study counts as a design-only project. Greg responded that the PEL study is different, as it is a pre-design and pre-NEPA process.

Greg Wichser stated that he wants to see how the design-only projects play out and hopes that they will get construction funding through discretionary programs, thus freeing up TIP funding. Sandy added that she encourages joint applications from multiple sponsors for discretionary programs. Kelley Kircher added that

certain discretionary programs such as BUILD require huge effort to prepare applications, and that combining projects and going for large projects can be worthwhile.

Greg stated that sponsors should start the design phase on some projects with their own local funding, then pursue construction funding through the TIP. This would give sponsors a better idea of project cost and alleviate issues relating to environmental or ROW. Having the design completed before coming to the TIP table indicates the project is a high priority for the sponsor. Jacob asked if the sponsor could get the design reimbursed later, and Greg replied that no, if the design was not authorized through the TIP, it cannot be reimbursed later.

Chris Wallin stated that for the Crane Street Bridge, he would likely have pursued design on his own had the project not been funded through the TIP. Mike Valentine asked if sponsors can get more points in the TIP evaluation if they have a completed design? Steve Feeney suggested that projects should get a few more points if design is complete due to better cost estimate and vetting of issues. Sandy suggested considering bonus points for completed designs. Andrew Kreshik cautioned that this could harm communities who do not have local funding to complete designs. Mike Valentine added that Saratoga County has provided design funds for municipalities that have performed well on projects in the past. Sandy reiterated her concerns about design-only projects having an expectation of receiving TIP construction funding later, which was not the original intent and would leave less money on the table. Sandy stated that receiving TIP design funding is not a commitment to receiving later construction funding, but that using non-federal funds for design should give bonus points. Kelley Kircher suggested that this could be a basis for the project deliverability score. Greg states that having a completed design is helpful for the Tap/CMAQ program. Jacob concluded the discussion by suggesting that a future task force meeting could cover design-only funding.

4) Next Steps

Jacob discussed the next steps. Meeting #4 will be in June and will focus on reviewing and finalizing the Final Draft TIP Policy Document. The Final Draft Policy Document will then be brought to the Planning Committee for approval in July or August, and then to the Policy Board in September. Future task force discussions could include ongoing discussion of Design only projects, TIP amendment guidelines, TIP fiscal constraint, and how to display TIP information on our website.

5) Meeting Adjourned

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45

The next meeting will be scheduled for June 2023.