

CDTC's 2010-15 Transportation Improvement Program Update Guidance for Additional Round Two Programming

Recap

Round One programming, completed on February 10, 2010, was the phase of TIP building that considered new projects based strictly on quantitative merit, and limited consideration to only those projects that are in project categories that are the most seriously under funded in the TIP relative to New Visions budgets. Under Round One, the Planning Committee recommended funding roadway reconstruction, bridge & highway maintenance, and goods movement projects totaling \$70.8 million.

In Round Two, consideration is opened up to all projects in all categories, and additional projects are selected based on quantitative merit, compelling non-quantitative arguments, geographic distribution, and other issues to ensure a balanced program. Round Two programming discussions thus far resulted in choosing projects worth \$37 million under the categories of safety, regional set-asides, and bridges. The CDTC Planning Committee will continue to work on completing Round Two programming on April 7th.

The Adopted Guidance

From the standard language in CDTC's TIP documentation since the beginning of the New Visions era, TIP budgetary guidance is stated as follows:

1. *CDTC desires full implementation of all plan elements.*

For example, reducing the percentage of deficient bridges to 20% (one element of the plan) and improving bike and pedestrian accommodations on a priority network (another element) are both important and complete implementation success is desired for both.

2. *Under constrained budgets, preserving the existing transportation system has a higher priority than making improvements or additions.*

CDTC's existing principles and the *New Visions* effort have repeatedly emphasized the need to maintain what we currently have as a priority.

3. *Even under constrained budgets, making some degree of progress with improvements is essential.*

It is realistic and appropriate to assume that some amount of highway or bridge improvement, bike accommodation or access management redesign will be included in CDTC's and members' action agendas -- even if budgets are reduced from historic levels.

4. *Availability of funds dedicated to a particular mode, system or purpose frees up "flexible" funds.*

Sources with a tightly defined list of eligible purposes are a reality. These benefit specific purposes directly, and other purposes indirectly. Practically speaking, if CDTA receives a discretionary Section 5309 capital grant for bus replacement, or if State Dedicated Funds for state highway projects are increased, this increase reduces the load on other, flexible fund sources.

5. *Priority for the use of flexible funds is not to be based on ownership.*

This statement emphasizes CDTC's historic perspective on funding, reaffirmed through the *New Visions* effort -- funding availability and project design should be based on function and location, not on issues of jurisdiction.

Based on these principles, CDTC's approach to TIP development is based upon the conclusions that:

1. Flexible funds (that is, competitive fund sources) can be broadly targeted to specific project categories based on relative funding need -- after accounting for the availability of dedicated funds and after assigning extra weight to the funding requirements of preserving the existing system; and,
2. Project priority within a project category can be determined based on need, cost effectiveness, urgency and other factors.

Implications for the Current Programming Discussion

Relying on these repeatedly-reaffirmed policies, CDTC's TIP process works best when sufficient resources are on the table for a programming process. As in the case of the current 2010-15 TIP update, the programming occurs in three rounds:

1. **Round One:** The first of the funds from competitive fund sources available for programming is assigned solely to categories with the greatest budgetary deficiency, defined in terms of annual funding vs. the New Visions annualized funding need. Within each category, funding is assigned in priority order to projects with the greatest cost-effectiveness on important facilities. *Round One guarantees that the new TIP will contain very good projects in very important locations, without regard to specific geography or ownership.* For the 2010-15 TIP update, this has led to a near-complete focus on highway rehab and rehabilitation projects in Round One.
2. **Round Two:** Having already committed to the projects that emerge from the Round One process, the next round of funds is available to any and all projects that passed CDTC's screening criterion. "Passing screen" defines a project as both worthwhile and constructive. The question posed in Round Two is one of equity, balance and completeness. That is, which project or projects should be added to the list of prior commitments to create the best and most balanced TIP?

Considerations given in Round Two should be:

- What categories of projects are still under-funded, even after Round One? (The relative funding need concept above is not ignored, even after Round One.)
- What categories of projects are under-represented? (The steady progress concept above requires consideration of the wide range of initiatives at all times.)

- What compelling arguments exist for projects, regardless of numeric score? (The recognition that the numbers don't tell the whole story has its legitimate place at the CDTC table in Round Two discussions.)
- What mix of projects would best produce the best overall TIP? (The concern for balance by geography, project type, project size, mode, etc. must be a major concern in Round Two discussions.)

For the 2010-15 TIP discussions on April 7, the Planning Committee must also take into account the fact that Round One and the first portion of Round Two have programmed nearly \$100 M to new projects. Given that all of this federal funding is speculative, programming a substantial amount of additional funding in Round Two requires a few additional considerations not typical in CDTC's programming efforts:

- Can the project wait six to ten years for construction?
- If not, is it such an urgent need that members would be willing to defer other existing commitments to make room for it?
- Is the local and regional priority of the project sufficiently strong to persist for years (and for CDTC or sponsor resist the pressure to revisit the commitment as the TIP is reviewed in two, three or five years)?

These three additional considerations should encourage choosing *only those projects for Round Two funding with which members are very comfortable in terms of need, urgency, longevity and program balance*. Programming discussions should be curtailed when a comfortable, constructive consensus on additional projects is no longer likely. There will be additional opportunities to consider these projects in coming years, long before these funds are likely to be available.

3. **Round Three:** Regardless of the scale of funding handled in Round Two, a modest amount of programming capacity is reserved to program after all public comment has been received. This ensures an opportunity to address issues that Round One and Two have overlooked. At the scale of current projects, Round Three funding for the 2010-15 TIP update should be set at between \$5M and \$10M, regardless of whether all Round Two funding was programmed.

The programming logic of Round Three is identical to that for Round Two, but cognizant of issues that may have emerged since the Round Two discussions. In other words, what project or projects should be added to the TIP because of compelling arguments that it (or they) address urgent needs and contribute to a better overall balance in the TIP?

Reference Material

The following tables were prepared to help guide discussions:

1. Table 1 describes the projects by type programmed under Round One.
2. Tables 2-10 describe the remaining unprogrammed candidate projects eligible for Round Two and Round Three programming