

Capital District
Transportation Committee

September 17, 2013

**Capital District Transportation Committee
Proposal for Incentive to Start Preliminary Engineering**

In order to encourage project implementation and completion, CDTC staff is proposing that TIP projects, whose preliminary engineering (PE) funds are not obligated in the federal fiscal year (FFY) in which they are programmed, be removed from the TIP. This would ensure that projects would not linger on the program indefinitely.

The following points clarify some of the reasoning behind this proposal:

- 1) The expectation is that once PE funds are obligated, the project would be progressed.
- 2) It is also anticipated that it is not a burden on the sponsor to obligate PE funds in the FFY in which they are programmed, or the sponsor would've requested those funds in a different FFY. Therefore, sponsors should take care to make sure the PE funds are programmed in the appropriate FFY.
- 3) If federal funds are obligated and the project is not advanced sufficiently in the next ten years, the sponsor could be required to pay back the federal-aid as per FHWA guidelines.

The following would help govern the policy:

- 1) If a project is removed from the TIP in this fashion, the funding returns to wherever it came from (for example, a regional set-aside or the general pot of funds). The project would then have no status.
- 2) Planning Committee action would be required to change the schedule of the first PE phase for any project, via project amendment request. Approval of such a request would essentially grant an extension. Project selection guidelines would be amended to reflect this. It should be expected that the normal standards for approving this amendment would be greater than that of routine amendments, or this policy would be less effectual.
- 3) Removal of the project is automatic and does not require subsequent action from the Planning Committee or Policy Board.
- 4) The deadline for an extension to the preliminary engineering schedule is inclusion in the mail-out for the November Planning Committee meeting following the close of the FFY. This gives sponsors two meetings after the close of the FFY to request an extension. An extension can also be sought prior to the close of the FFY. Automatic removal of projects not receiving an extension will occur shortly after the November meeting.
- 5) This policy applies to all project sponsors, and that for this policy, the project sponsor is also the project implementer.
- 6) This policy could apply to projects added after the policy is approved, or it can be applied to all projects on the TIP, since action to approve this policy could be taken at the very beginning of the 2013-18 TIP. If approved, the Planning Committee would need to clarify which projects the policy pertains to.