



Project Selection Advisory Council Recommendations Executive Summary

Background

The Project Selection Advisory Council (the Council), as established by the Massachusetts Legislature in Section 11 of Chapter 46 of the Acts of 2013, was charged with developing uniform criteria and a prioritization process to be used by MassDOT in the preparation of MassDOT's 5-year Comprehensive Transportation Plan, what MassDOT refers to as the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

The intent of the legislation was to create a uniform, transparent, data-driven approach to determining how limited resources are allocated to preserve, modernize, and expand the Commonwealth's transportation system.

Explicit requirements of the legislation include for the Council to:

- Hold six public hearings to solicit public comment, one in each MassDOT Highway District
- Develop uniform criteria and a transparent prioritization formula
- Deliver formal recommendations to the Legislature

The Council members were appointed as per specifications in the statute and represent various interests and areas of transportation expertise from around the state. The Council has met regularly since early 2014, with the initial December 31, 2014 deadline having been extended to June 30, 2015 to allow the new gubernatorial administration to inform the recommendations.

The scope of the Council's work focused primarily on MassDOT Highway (including bicycle and pedestrian facilities), MBTA, and Regional Transit projects—the recipients of the bulk of the more flexible funding categories. Moreover, these divisions have more comparable purposes and activity types versus Aeronautics and the Registry of Motor Vehicles.

Based on a review of best practices from other states, as well as a review of existing MassDOT and MBTA processes, and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) transportation evaluation criteria, the Council is recommending a project prioritization formula and framework that will leverage successful existing processes in the development of a more uniform, data-driven, and transparent project selection process.

Recommendations for Framework

After considerable deliberation, the Council is recommending to evaluate projects using six different scoring categories, with their own specific set of criteria and weights:

- Highway Modernization
- Highway Capacity
- MBTA Modernization
- MBTA Capacity
- Regional Transit Modernization
- Regional Transit Capacity

The Council believes that having separate categories for these project types will allow for a more focused comparison of projects with mode specific data that adheres to primary funding agency performance targets.

The Council is defining **Modernization Projects** as projects aimed at leveraging the need to rehabilitate or replace assets in poor condition to then also make broader improvements. These improvements can include incorporating new technology or making other enhancements to support economic development, improve mobility, reduce negative impacts to the environment, or increase safety. The impetus for these projects does not come solely from an asset management system.¹

- Highway Examples: roadway reconstruction, upgraded tolling infrastructure.
- Transit Examples: positive train control; bus stop, transit station or maintenance facility upgrades; rehabilitating transit vehicles or bus stops.

Capacity Projects are projects that add new connections or expand existing ones that no longer address user demand.

- Highway Examples: new off-road multi-use paths, new bypass roads, connector roads, frontage roads, fly-overs, new or re-engineered interchanges.
- Transit Examples: extending a transit line, additional buses beyond a 1:1 replacement rate, new bus stops or transit stations, new or expanded maintenance facilities.

The “Scoring System Recommendations” document outlines the criteria, weights, objectives, and data requirements pertaining to each of the six scoring systems.

The Council is proposing a full framework for prioritization that recognizes that evaluating specific projects cannot be done in isolation. Even the most strategically designed criteria cannot ensure that an appropriate distribution of projects across asset categories and across regions is achieved. Therefore, the Council is recommending the following process be undertaken as part of project selection:

1. **Project Evaluation:** Evaluate projects at initiation to determine whether they have the potential to ultimately be programmed in the CIP and should therefore proceed into design.
2. **Performance and Funding Targets:** Develop fiscally constrained performance targets and use these to set asset-level funding targets for the given 5-year plan. The weMove Massachusetts Planning for Performance tool can help support the development of funding targets.²
3. **Funding Allocation:** On an annual basis, re-score projects taking into consideration project readiness and any changes in cost and scope to assign to a budget year. This funding allocation is preliminary and may be modified based on Step 4.

¹ Asset management programs will not be subject to the evaluation criteria; however, they will be subject to steps 2-5 and Council recommendations regarding transparency.

² MassDOT is working to refine and update the WeMove Massachusetts Planning for Performance Tool to accommodate the needs outlined in Steps 2 and 4.

4. Comparison to Targets:

Asset Balance: Compare the anticipated performance outcomes of the preliminary 5-year funding allocation to the asset-level funding targets established in Step 2 using the weMove Massachusetts Planning for Performance Tool.

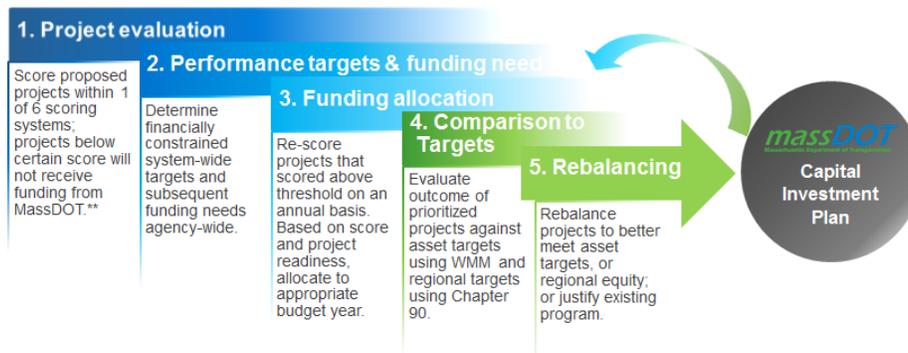
Regional Balance: At the same time, compare the preliminary 5-year funding allocation for each highway district to the share of Chapter 90 funding allocated to each highway district to ensure that the distribution of funding meets a standard of regional equity.

5. Rebalancing:

If the preliminary funding allocation for each asset results in +/- 10% difference from the established target, then a publicly available justification for proceeding with the preliminary funding allocation will need to be made.

If the share of the preliminary funding allocation to each district is not within +/- 10% of the Chapter 90 share to each district, then a publicly available justification for proceeding with the preliminary funding allocation will need to be made.

Alternatively, if there is no justification for the deviation from the established targets, then projects will need to be replaced in order to address those targets.



*The CIP is a fiscally constrained compendium of all infrastructure-related spending programmed by department and meets the legislative requirements for the State Comprehensive Transportation Plan, which the project selection process is supposed to inform. It includes the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) and MBTA Capital Investment Program. See slide 28 for more information.

**Projects can be resubmitted and re-evaluated with revised scopes.

Recommendations for Implementation

The Council recommends that four scoring committees be established with representatives of subject matter experts and a designee from the Secretary to score the following scoring systems:

1. Highway Modernization
2. MBTA Modernization
3. Regional Transit Modernization
4. Capacity Projects (all modes)

The initiator of the project can designate the appropriate scoring system; however, it will be up to the scoring committee to confirm it has been classified appropriately. The scoring committee should meet at least once a year to review scored projects and select a threshold for which projects should advance based on the project evaluation score and anticipated funding levels.

Projects will be re-scored annually once they are anticipated to be ready for inclusion in the five-year CIP.

All project scoring should be made publicly available.

An internal steering committee will be established to develop standard operating procedures and more specific scoring guidance based on Council recommendations. The steering committee will also oversee any changes to the scoring formula or framework based on new data or systems that become available or to respond to how successfully the framework works when put into practice on a large scale. It is recommended that the justification for any changes be made available on the Project Selection website.

The Steering Committee will also provide guidance on how to begin transitioning from existing processes to incorporation of the project selection criteria and framework. It is the Council's goal for processes to be in place to allow for the Council's recommendations to begin to be implemented for projects going into FY 2017 CIP.