



Transit Service Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC)
VDOT Auditorium
1221 E. Broad Street, Richmond VA
10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Minutes

Members Present:

John McGlennon, Chair
Cheryl Openshaw
Brian Smith
Ken Pollock

Kate Mattice

Members Not Present:

The Honorable Jim Dyke

Cindy Mester

Staff and Presenters:

Jennifer Mitchell

Jen DeBruhl

Chris Smith

David Jackson, Cambridge Systematics

Steve Pittard

Courtney Bujakowski

Tom Harrington, Cambridge Systematics

1. Call to Order / Introductions (10:06 AM) – Chairman John McGlennon called the meeting to order and introduced members. He stated that members Cindy Mester and Jim Dyke were not available to attend but could email comments following the meeting.
2. Tom Harrington from Cambridge Systematics gave a presentation on the Prioritization Process and Measures. Tom summarized points of consensus that were made at the last meeting and have shaped his work. At the last meeting, there was general consensus that there would be two different tracks: for SGR (State of Good Repair) and expansion projects. The two different tracks will have different sets of criteria, and would be ranked separately. For the purpose of the presentation he defined State of Good Repair Projects as ones involving existing assets and enhancement projects as projects that add capacity, not capital. Tom Harrington explained that, based on input from TSDAC, he defined projects with a value less 2 million dollars, or expansion vehicle purchases of less than 5 vehicles or 5% of the fleet, as the threshold for a minor “enhancement”. Minor enhancements would be scored through the SGR process. The following comments were made during the presentation.

- a. Brian Smith asked for an explanation as to why \$2 million was the dollar amount established for the threshold. Tom Harrington explained that he went back and looked at current SYIP projects. He also had to make a determination on what projects could be evaluated with the major expansion criteria.
- b. Kate Mattice stated that she wants to go back and look at the \$2 million threshold. She wants to be careful that by creating a “minor enhancement” type, we are not in effect creating a third category for evaluation. Kate also asked if she could use this opportunity to give some fundamental suggestion changes. Cheryl Openshaw asked that we work through the presentation before having that discussion.
- c. Asset Condition Scoring was discussed. DRPT currently screens and reviews for need, this part of the process won’t change. The focus is on assets that have reached their useful life. Highest priority is given to things that are worn. FTA Condition Rating Scoring scale will continue to be used.
 - i. Ken Pollock pointed out that asset assessments are made a year in advance, so deterioration of the asset is estimated. Tom Harrington said that the projected needs for when the funding is being requested should be looked at.
 - ii. Tom shared that non vehicle projects will still use the same FTA scoring and that there may be many lines on an application with multiple assets.
 - iii. There was discussion but no clear consensus about funding requests for multiple assets, noted in slide 10 of the presentation, in which some components are SGR but others are “minor expansion” or “minor enhancement” and how such projects would be scored for potential funding.
- d. Service Quality was discussed.
 - i. Kate Mattice expressed concern that there may be double counting if an asset is scored as being in poor condition and then receives a service quality rating score for “Service Frequency, Travel Time and or/Reliability”. Tom Harrington explained that the service quality rating will be measuring what the effect is of the asset being in poor condition.
- e. Example Projects were discussed
 - i. Brian Smith said that technology projects are not doing well in the current system and he doesn’t see any technology projects listed in the example spreadsheet. We need to consider items like scheduling software and other technology to improve efficiency in the analysis.
 - ii. Kate Mattice raised concern about implication for the capital cost of contracting and how that may be approached in the prioritization.
 - iii. Tom Harrington said that these projects are just examples; the key next step will be to determine how the grant applications will be set up.
 - iv. Cheryl Openshaw stated that projects would not pigeonholed into one criteria and that all projects would be evaluated across all criteria.
- f. Cost Effectiveness Scores are Discussed
 - i. Tom Harrington stated that the criteria need to be clear enough to provide justification for scores and ranking.
 - ii. Tom Harrington proposed not to calculate the Cost Effectiveness score for SGR projects as it would always cause smaller projects to outweigh larger ones. He

also reemphasized that in previous discussions it has been concluded that projects should not be prioritized based on ridership.

- iii. Brian Smith asked for the definition of technical score which Tom Harrington said is the same as the benefit score. Mr. Smith also noted that the term “cost effectiveness” could instead be considered “cost leverage score” because what is being scored at this point is the effective leverage of state dollars and not really the “cost effectiveness” of a given project.
- g. Kate Mattice introduced to a proposal from VTA members for SGR Prioritization for TSDAC. The proposal suggested using an agency-based prioritization process. Agencies are already developing their own plans that could be leveraged to work within the prioritization process. It proposed that DRPT would allocate funding to the top needs of each agency. All agencies would receive some funding this way. Kate Mattice suggested that Transit Capital SGR may be akin to highway maintenance where each VDOT District provides its own list of priorities. Leveraging existing Agency plans would limit the administrative burden to DRPT and the Transit Agencies.
 - i. Jen DeBruhl explained to the committee that there is a difference between maintenance funding and state of good repair funding at VDOT. Maintenance funding is prioritized at the district level and is utilized for operations. State of Good Repair is funded separately and is subject to a statewide process. Kate Mattice stated that using an Agency’s analysis of their priorities should at least be considered. They are already required to prioritize asset investments if they are following the FTA regulations. Also, if each agency knew they would be getting some funding every year than they would be able to plan better.
 - ii. Chairman John McGlennon said that the state also has to meet its priorities. How do we ensure that the highest priorities each transit agency puts forth are in line with those of the state?
 - iii. Ken Pollock asked who will be doing the scoring. Is it too subjective? He said that coming up with an internal list of priorities to submit may help agencies to get a handle on their priorities.
 - iv. Cheryl Openshaw said that we have to find a way to look across agencies at a state level to make sure priorities are being met.
 - v. Brian Smith asked Cheryl Openshaw about the current way that funds are programmed and if there is a strain, to which Cheryl replied there is not currently because we have the funding we need. We have to look forward to a time when we might not.
 - vi. Brian Smith said that he believes there are similarities between the transit agency’s priorities and the state’s priorities. He believes there is value in leaning into existing regulations.
 - vii. Kate Mattice stated that a fundamental decision needs to be made. Does everyone get funding or are there winners and losers?
 - viii. Chairman John McGlennon asked if priorities could be categorized and if there is a way to ensure that an agency’s request ties to the documented long term plans for the agency.
 - ix. Cheryl Openshaw said that she understands the need for predictability for the transit agencies, but we have to keep in mind the state’s ultimate role. A hybrid approach may be able to be considered.

- x. Jen DeBruhl shared some other considerations about the VTA proposal. She stated that smaller grantees have signed onto the Tier II state plan. The larger Tier I grantees are putting together plans on their own, and there may be a need for a state role in those Tier I plans if they are utilized for statewide prioritization. There would need to be common criteria and possibly terms for statewide prioritization. The use of TAM plans may also preclude the inclusion of minor enhancement in the more streamlined SGR process.
 - xi. To Cheryl Openshaw's point the state has a responsibility to look statewide.
 - xii. Kate Mattice asked how the metrics and priorities could be brought into the TAM plans so that they are standardized. There may be a gray area when setting targets. She again stressed the need for expectation and predictability.
- h. Tom Harrington summed up some of the larger issues
 - i. Who is doing the service quality rating? Is it DRPT or the grantee?
 - ii. What will happen when there is not enough funding? This plan tries to look at that.
- i. Cheryl Openshaw pointed out that in the alternate approach suggested by Kate Mattice that minor expansion would drop out. Jennifer Mitchell concurred that all expansion would have to go together, if the TAM plans were the basis of funding SGR projects..
- j. Chairman McGlennon asked the committee to try to reach consensus on State of Good Repair.
 - i. Cheryl Openshaw stated that the overwhelming amount of funding would be for SGR so we have to get this right. A concept has to be created and moved forward and that some details can be sorted out when we get to implementation. Jennifer Mitchell concurred that it is critical to give the consultants guidance so that scenarios can be developed. The committee is charged with bringing a proposal to the General Assembly by July. After that there will be time to work on implementation and program structure. Cheryl Openshaw said that today's meeting should be focused on coming to SGR conclusions. The Expansion portion is small and patterned off of SMARTSCALE.
 - ii. John reiterated the following concerns he heard throughout the meeting.
 - 1. Double counting of scores (asset condition and service quality)
 - 2. Reflecting priorities of individual systems
 - 3. Desire to provide grantees with predictability.
 - 4. Desire to utilize existing systems and minimize administrative burden.
- k. Tom Harrington discussed next steps
 - i. He and his team are working with Nate Macek from PB to look at typical projects and get a rough idea of funding level for prioritization.
 - ii. The committee discussed that if the VTA approach, or a hybrid thereof, is used then minor enhancement projects would be evaluated with expansion projects.
 - iii. Chairman McGlennon asked if assumptions can be made moving forward and if DRPT data is being used? Jennifer Mitchell said that DRPT data is being used.

- l. Cheryl Openshaw suggested that maybe each agency could put in one SGR application per year with the requested projects prioritized according to the agency's TAM plan. If DRPT disagrees with the project prioritization provided by the grantee within that application, there would be an opportunity for dialogue.
 - m. Brian Smith clarified that there is no dollar threshold for SGR and asked if there was consensus that there is no cost effectiveness score. All on the committee agreed.
 - n. Tom Harrington stated that for purposes of moving forward he will use this as a default and pull out enhancements.
3. The Meeting broke for lunch until 12:45.
4. David Jackson from Cambridge Systematics continued the discussion of prioritization with a discussion of Major Expansion Projects.
 - a. He informed the group that the purpose of the presentation was to look at the established SMART SCALE criteria and determine which measures were the most important for transit. He is confident that Land Use and Accessibility are two of the most important factors. The goal is to look at a process similar to SMART SCALE, while simplifying it.
 - b. Draft Methodology is discussed.
 - i. Congestion Mitigation could be simplified by measuring ridership.
 1. Brian Smith asked how the ridership number would be normalized. The point was made that a certain number of riders for one project may be significant, whereas for another project that same number may not be significant. A perceived need was shared to in some way ground the ridership factor in such a way that different projects could be fairly evaluated.
 - ii. Economic Development would focus exclusively on local economic development strategies.
 - iii. Access should separate jobs and populations and measure for multi modal access.
 - iv. Safety should be altered to focus on the direct safety benefit as opposed to the indirect benefit to roadway users.
 - v. Environmental Quality should look at potential emissions reduction scaled by new ridership.
 - vi. Land Use will have no change.
 - c. David Jackson explained that more project concept details would be needed with transit expansion projects than with SMART SCALE.
 - d. David Jackson brought up key discussion points.
 - i. Scaling/Normalizing
 1. Should the SMART SCALE approach where points are scaled by a factor representative of project size, ridership or density continue?
 2. Benefits Score/Cost is a possible weighting option. Small Projects with low cost can do well across tiers.
 - ii. Land Use
 1. Should the same SMART SCALE approach be used in all regions?

iii. Possible Weighting

1. Weighting of expansion projects was tested with a sample of 8 projects. David showed that there was not a significant change to scores when weighting was applied. Weighting could be used as a comparison after the fact. Each score in the sample project group was not affected by geography and all six factor areas were weighted equally.
2. Kate Mattice asked about the weighting of safety. She pointed out that she does not think that safety should have the same weighting as accessibility. Weighting may be dependent on what the priorities are for a particular project type. Following SMART SCALE weighting methodology may have benefits.
3. Brian Smith acknowledged Mr. Jackson's point about lack of information or ability of applicants under SMART Scale to submit supporting information to meaningfully rate Economic Development, however Mr. Smith did not see how this then necessarily translates to rolling up everything on this factor to only high level square footage. Mr. Smith expressed interest in learning of any other potential measures for this factor.
4. Brian Smith pointed out that, though the factors cited in the legislation are the same, the legislation did not direct the committee or advisory board to mimic or replicate SMART scale. With this in mind differentiation may not be bad. Differentiation could be relevant also because future major projects are likely to also apply for SMART Scale funding. A concern shared at this point was that, by approaching the overall task at hand in ways that make SMART scale the dominant reference point, then making changes and seeking to justify why these changes make sense, this appears to begin creating the impression that SMART scale is the expected starting point TSDAC or others are obligated to even though SMART scale was designed for different purposes. Mr. Smith stated that TSDAC should not feel obligated to SMART scale and future packaging and communicating of information of TSDAC recommendations should take this into account. The committee is being asked to look at what is appropriate for transit prioritization.
5. Kate Mattice asked DRPT what their priorities are.
 - a. Jennifer Mitchell replied that different projects have different priorities. DRPT has heard at previous meetings from TSDAC that some consistency should be kept with SMART SCALE for ease of applying for funding from both programs.
6. Jennifer Mitchell suggested that some weighting be applied to determine what is most important. She does not think there is a need for weighting by region but there may be a benefit to consistent weighting across the state.
7. Tom Harrington said that he will use example projects to test the weighting.

5. Consensus and Remaining Issues

- a. The group reached a consensus that predictability, consistency and minimizing the administrative burden are important parts of the process.
 - b. State of Good Repair prioritization should be based on condition, mileage and FTA condition ratings.
 - c. Figuring out how local asset management plans work with the proposed Service Quality Criteria is a priority.
 - d. Priorities from transit agencies will be reflected in their grant applications.
 - e. Remaining Issues include
 - i. How will agency priorities be reflected in the scoring process?
 - ii. Should the technical score be dropped relative to cost?
 - iii. How will minor enhancement projects be addressed? In its own category or should those projects be included with major expansion projects? Still need to determine which projects fall into which category.
6. Wrap/Up and Next Steps
- a. The next TSDAC meeting is scheduled for February 14th. Kate Mattice asks what is needed from members at that meeting.
 - i. It is suggested that committee members can bring back examples of how their agencies lay out their prioritization.
 - ii. Whether all agencies get some funding for SGR is a fundamental decision point. Members should consider what reliability of funding looks like – receiving some share of funding for projects, but the funding level is variable based on requests; or expectation that if project is selected for funding that it would be funded at a consistent or potentially higher funding level than current.
 - iii. Brian Smith asked about Next Steps on page 25 of the presentation, specifically regarding Funding Rules. Mr. Smith reiterated concern about any future scenarios that would create potential to allow for Major Project applications to encroach on core state of good repair needs across the Commonwealth. Beginning to explore options as part of next steps, Mr. Smith noted interest in the potential for a framework, for example split 80/20 of available mass transit capital funds, in which only SGR projects could be eligible for funding from the first 80 percent while both SGR and Minor Enhancement projects could draw on funds from the other 20 percent. Rated and ranked projects would get state match based on Tiers based on available funds. Mr. Smith shared the view that major projects, which would also likely be able to compete for SMART Scale or other funds, will likely need some new separate funding source due to the persistent needs to achieve and maintain state of good repair and overall limited funding.
 - b. John McGlennon will consult with Jen DeBruhl prior to the next meeting on what questions the members will need to be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.
7. Update on Economic Analysis
- a. Jen DeBruhl shared that KPMG is working on the economic impact analysis that was requested by the TSDAC.
 - b. Agencies may be contacted by their grant managers to provide data and answer questions.
 - c. They should have something to present at the March meeting.

8. Public Comment-No one signed up for public comment.
9. Meeting was adjourned by Chairman McGlennon at 2:07 pm.