Revamping VTrans Project Selection & Prioritization Processes

Phase 1

What is this Project all about?

VTrans is revising its existing system to prioritize transportation projects using performance management and data analysis based on the condition of our transportation system. This project will result in a new Project Selection process and a revised Prioritization process which will support an Optimized Capital Program for Transportation Projects. We are leveraging our lessons learned over the last decade to revamp the project selection and prioritization processes, as well as incorporating stakeholder perspectives and adhering to new federal requirements and state law.

Why?

Our project prioritization process is more than 10 years old, and we feel this is an opportune time to study how the process as well as the selection and prioritization criteria can align with the Governor's vision to focus on the economy, affordability and serving our most vulnerable citizens as well as meeting new national performance goals. The result will create revised project selection and decision criteria that optimizes every dollar we spend. It also will create a defined, consistent and transparent system for selecting and prioritizing projects that balance the need to manage our existing transportation infrastructure, support our economy and enhance our quality of life.

When?

We started this effort at the beginning of 2017 and expect to roll out the new processes in time for the FY2020 project selection and prioritization cycle.

Who?

We are a multidisciplinary team consisting of VTrans, Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and engaged stakeholders entrusted with reviewing the processes, soliciting input from stakeholders, and guiding the Agency towards a new optimized transportation capital program.

HOW ARE WE DOING NOW?

There are three primary reasons for conducting this project now. First, there are no clear guidelines for adding or deleting a project to or from the Capital Program. Second, the current, and legislatively mandated, project prioritization process is more than ten years old and is sometimes cumbersome to apply. Finally, there are no performance metrics in use that provide an indication of the "transportation" value provided to Vermonters based on the investment of their tax dollars. Together, VTrans and the regional planning commissions (RPCs) feel that this is an opportune time to revamp the process to make it more useful, effective and relevant.

WHAT DOES DOING BETTER LOOK LIKE?

Doing better means a commitment to both phases of this project. The initial phase, Phase 1, targets the identification and implementation of process improvements while the second phase looks to increase efficiency and implementation utilizing a structured decision-making process.

It also means having defined procedures and processes to add and remove projects. Doing better means taking the existing project prioritization processes and strengthening them for the next 10 years. It means identifying what's important to Vermont and ensuring that VTrans and the RPCs are unified in their approach and commitment to providing the optimum mix of transportation projects to drive positive outcomes for all Vermonters.

HOW DOES VTRANS SUPPORT VERMONT'S GOALS?

VTrans maintains a safe and resilient transportation system in a state of good repair, keeping people and goods moving using a variety of multi-modal transportation options. A healthy transportation system provides both general and vulnerable populations with safe access to various transportation modes and services. VTrans supports economic development and community engagement by providing transportation projects to Vermont's communities.

WHAT ARE OUR CURRENT CHALLENGES?

- Maintain current and effective communication with internal and external stakeholders impacted by any process changes.

- Lack of experience in utilizing change management strategies.

- Lack of a clearly defined and uniform project prioritization system amongst RPCs and assets (programs).

- Lack of a process to add and remove "candidate" projects.

- Need to tie "project" performance or value to financial investments.

- Lack of proper decision-making tools to support the final, established process.

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WHAT ARE WE DOING?

- VTrans has hired a consultant who has assisted other State DOTs in similar initiatives. This Consultant team includes public relations and change management specialists.

- Work with internal and external stakeholders to identify what key transportation "values" (mobility, accessibility, environment, health, resiliency, safety, asset condition, community or economic development) are most meaningful to them; the most important to maintaining a vibrant, accessible and safe transportation system in a state of good repair.

- Work with the RPCs to develop a framework, associated processes as well as roles and responsibilities for each entity to **add and remove projects** from the Capital Program.

- Work with the RPCs to **revise current project prioritization processes**, establish a common level of understanding as well as to clearly articulate roles and responsibilities of each entity in the project prioritization process.

- Propose legislative language to replace past legislative language and requirements.

WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THIS PROJECT AND OUR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN?

VTrans' primary goal is to develop a project prioritization framework based on an understanding of how value is added to Vermont's transportation system and how the transportation network supports broader statewide goals related to the economy, quality of life and the environment. The Agency desires to communicate and maximize the value of taxpayers' monies that it invests on an annual basis through its Capital Program. VTrans recognizes that in order to do so it must develop and establish processes to evaluate its performance in selecting and prioritizing transportation projects.

The scope for this effort is outlined as follows:

- Identify Core Team and Executive Sponsors.
- Develop Change Management & Communication Strategies.
- Conduct Literature Review/Body of Working Knowledge.
- Conduct Stakeholder Workshops.
- Evaluate and Document the Current State for Project Selection and Prioritization.
- Discuss, Refine, and Develop Evaluation/Decision Criteria.

- Develop Weighting Scales and Establish Relative Importance of Decision Criteria.
- Develop the Proposed Future State for Project Selection and Prioritization.
- Provide Recommendations for an Optimized Capital Program.
- Develop and Propose Legislative Language Identifying the New Process.
- Prepare Interim and Final Reports and Presentations.

WHAT HAS TO GET DONE? BY WHEN?

Task	Date
Identify Core Team and Executive Sponsors	02/08/17
Conduct Literature Review	03/15/17
Document Current State of Project Prioritization Processes	04/22/17
Stakeholder Workshop #1- Discuss, Refine, and Develop Evaluation/Decision Criteria	05/03/17
Change Management Training for Consultant Team, Core Team and Executive Sponsors	05/04/17
Change Management & Communication Plan Timeline	06/01/17
Stakeholder Workshop #2 - Finalize evaluation criteria definitions	06/21/17
Prepare Interim Report & Presentation	06/30/17
Stakeholder Workshop #3 - Finalize decision-making model and establish relative importance of evaluation criteria	07/12/17
Stakeholder Workshop #4 (if needed)	TBD
Draft Legislative Language	01/15/18
Prepare Final Report & Presentation - Provide Recommendations for an Optimized Capital Program	01/31/18

Timeline months: Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan