

Memo



Metro

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Date: Thursday, October 19, 2017
To: Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation and Interested Parties
From: Grace Cho, Associate Transportation Planner
Ted Leybold, Resource Development Manager
Subject: 2021-2024 STIP – MPO Comment Letter on ODOT Administered Funds and Program Funding Levels

Purpose

Continue the discussion of the 2021-2024 STIP. Discuss proposals for funding levels for ODOT administered programs and implications for the Portland Metro region. Request JPACT approval to submit a comment letter to the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) regarding the funding levels for the ODOT administered funds.

Introduction and Background

As part of Metro's duties as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Portland region, Metro in partnership with ODOT, TriMet, SMART and local partners, is responsible for developing the federally mandated Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP). The MTIP is a coordination process and the schedule of expenditures (i.e., spending) of federal transportation funds as well as significant state and local funds in the Portland metropolitan region. As a report, the MTIP provides the implementation schedule of federally funded transportation projects and demonstrates how the transportation projects comply with federal regulations, such as fiscal constraint, air quality impacts, and public involvement. The MTIP also and monitors the region's progress towards achieving the vision and goals set forth in the region's long-range transportation plan.

JPACT and the Metro Council have the responsibility of overseeing the MTIP. Since any transportation project using federal funds, seeking a federal action, or on a regionally identified facility located in the metropolitan area must be included in the MTIP for eligibility purposes, the MPO has a role to ensure these transportation projects meet federal eligibility requirements and make progress towards implementing the adopted regional transportation plan (RTP). This includes those transportation funds administered by different agencies (e.g. ODOT, TriMet, SMART).

2021-2024 STIP Development – Assigning Revenues to ODOT Administered Funding Programs

At the September meeting of JPACT, the region submitted a comment letter requesting the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) consider three different actions as they provide direction to ODOT staff on the development of the 2021-2024 STIP. These actions include: 1) developing a secondary federal revenue assumption scenario aligned to historical trends; 2) develop a process for which new or unexpected revenue gets allocated which involves stakeholders and provides greater transparency; and 3) engage with the MPOs in the development of the 2021-2024 STIP.

Since the submission of the comment letter, the OTC has invited the chair of the Oregon Metropolitan Planning Organization Consortium (OMPOC) to the October OTC meeting with the ACT chairs, Regional Solutions Groups, and others to engage on the development of the 2021-2024 STIP. At this time, it is unknown whether the OTC will consider the other two requests made by the region.

With stakeholder feedback being provided, the development of the 2021-2024 STIP continues to move forward. Since July, ODOT staff has led conversations with the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) on the funding allocation programs for the 2021-2024 STIP. Currently the OTC is deliberating the following questions:

1. What level of funding should be assigned to each of the major funding categories proposed for the 2021-2024 STIP?
2. Among the different funding categories, what level of funding should be assigned to the individual programs?
 - a. More specifically, how much of available discretionary funding be applied to the Enhance – Highway program, in light of funding form HB2017?
3. How should the Enhance – Highway program be administered?
 - a. Should the Enhance – Highway program be administered similarly to the 2018-2021 cycle, where the funding was used as a leverage program to place highway enhancements on Fix-it and Safety projects?
 - b. Should the Enhance – Highway program be administered similarly to the 2015-2018 cycle, where the funding was competitively allocated and the ACTs played a role in recommending and selecting projects?

The OTC will engage stakeholders at its October meeting around these questions and will then take action on assigning funding levels at the December meeting. The winter 2017 decision will establish the funding levels to the allocation programs for federal fiscal years 2022-2024. The OTC's direction on the questions can significantly impact the ability to consider strategic tradeoffs between funding programs and provide local input to the various ODOT funding programs.

Recommendation & Comment Letter

As discussed at September JPACT, the Portland metropolitan region should continue to engage in the STIP discussions not only as a means to bring transparency to these state funding programs which implement important projects in the region, but also because of the role of the MTIP. Since these different STIP funding programs are driven by and mixed with federal funding, the MPO is expected to program these funds and ensure compliance with federal mandates to maintain eligibility and to encourage local input into how these allocation decisions are guided and consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan. This is also an opportunity for the region to make ODOT leadership aware of the unique transportation challenges the region faces as they consider how to shape the funding programs.

In anticipation of the OTC discussions around the ODOT funding programs, Metro staff held discussions with jurisdictional staff and at the September TPAC meeting to gather initial input to make up a comment letter to help inform and engage in the OTC discussion. From the two discussions, Metro staff developed a draft comment letter centered around five themes, which are aimed at desired outcomes the region wants to see from the ODOT funding programs. These themes (in no particular order) are:

1. Invest comprehensively and adequately in urban arterials.
2. Invest in project development and the Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) program to allow future transportation investments to emerge successfully.
3. Have all ODOT funding programs create a "shelf-ready" list of priorities for consideration when unexpected revenue emerges.
4. For funding dedicated to addressing transportation safety, allocate these funds to where they will be the most effective at reducing serious injuries and fatalities.

5. Further invest in the transportation strategies which are the most effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Further detail about each of the themes is provided as part of the comment letter. The comment letter was distributed to members of TPAC in early October via email. In the early October communication, Metro staff asked for TPAC direction on two specific comments which staff interpreted the input to be mixed and there was not consensus. These comments related to: 1) requesting that new safety funding from HB2017 be allocated in a “jurisdictionally-blind” manner; and 2) allow for project development funding be eligible for facilities beyond the state system. Based on the feedback received by TPAC members, the “jurisdictionally-blind” comment was generally supported by all TPAC members, but the eligibility of facilities beyond the state system came in mixed and without consensus. As a result, the jurisdictionally-blind feedback has been reflected, but the eligibility of project development beyond the state system is not reflected in the letter. The revised comment letter is (attached) and reflects other input and direction provided by TPAC. The draft comment letter seeks JPACT approval for submission to the OTC.

Next Steps

The following timeline has been provided to illustrate the next steps for the 2021-2024 STIP development.

Timeline – 2021-2024 STIP Policy Discussion

| Activity | Timeframe |
|---|--------------------|
| Region 1 ACT meeting of 2021-2024 STIP and program funding levels | September 11, 2017 |
| Continued Discussion of 2021-2024 STIP and Comment Letter for JPACT Approval <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronically submitted comment letter to OTC | September 21, 2017 |
| Initial brainstorming discussion with jurisdiction staff on ODOT administered funding programs | September 21, 2017 |
| TPAC discussion over brainstormed ideas on the ODOT administered funding programs and initial draft comment letter | September 29, 2017 |
| Stakeholder Input at OTC Retreat | October 19, 2017 |
| Region 1 ACT meeting and further discussion of the 2021-2024 STIP | November 6, 2017 |
| Additional discussion at OTC on 2021-2024 STIP and Program Funding Levels | November 17, 2017 |
| Approval of 2021-2024 STIP funding scenario and program funding –levels | December 15, 2017 |