

Policy Owner: Assistant Commissioner – Sustainability, Planning, and Program Management

Policy Contact: Project Selection Policy Coordinator, Office of Transportation System Management

Policy Statement

The Minnesota Department of Transportation will use objective and transparent processes to:

- evaluate, prioritize, and select all capital projects, except those exempted by this policy in the applicability section below;
- evaluate, prioritize, and select construction projects on the state highway system to be included in the Capital Highway Investment Plan (CHIP) and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP);
- award grants for capital projects; and
- allocate funding or resources for capital projects, including trunk highway and general obligation bonds.

MnDOT will document and make publicly available for each selection process or program:

- criteria and process for assigning a numeric score and selecting projects
- list of candidate projects considered
- scores assigned to projects and reasoning behind selection decisions not included in the score

MnDOT has published the [Guide to MnDOT Highway Construction Project Selection](#) and the [Guide to MnDOT Capital Project Selection](#). The two guides include an overview of MnDOT's project selection processes, including documentation on the scoring processes and criteria for each program. The guides are incorporated into this policy by reference. Additionally, programs that award grants for capital projects have additional requirements under the Grants Management Policy and Agency Grants Management Manual.

Use of Numeric Scores

MnDOT will use pre-determined, defined criteria to assign numeric scores in all selection processes subject to this policy. The numeric scores will inform project selection decisions, but MnDOT may consider other factors in addition to the numeric score. When MnDOT does not select a high scoring project or selects a lower scoring project, MnDOT will provide a short explanation for the reasoning behind the selection.

Reason for Policy

- Advance the Minnesota GO Vision and Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan objective of Open Decision-Making
- Increase the transparency and public understanding of MnDOT's project selection processes

- Implement recommendations from the 2016 Office of the Legislative Auditor's evaluation report "MnDOT Highway Project Selection"
- Comply with the requirements of [Minnesota Laws 2017, First Special Session, Chapter 3, Article 3, Section 124](#) and [Minnesota Laws 2021, First Special Session, Chapter 5, Article 4, Section 134](#).

Applicability

All MnDOT employees must comply with MnDOT policies.

The original policy, effective November 30, 2018, applied to evaluating and prioritizing capital construction projects on the state highway system either delivered by or selected by MnDOT.

With the November 1, 2022, revision, this policy was expanded to include capital project selections and programs for the following: rail grade separation program; greater Minnesota transit capital program; safety improvements on crude oil corridors; facilities capital improvement program; Minnesota rail service improvement program; port development assistance program; and airport projects funded entirely with state or local funds.

The policy does not apply to:

- Programs for which MnDOT does not make the selection decision
- Projects included in the 2019-2022 State Transportation Improvement Program

According to [Minnesota Laws 2021, First Special Session, Chapter 5, Article 4, Section 134](#), the policy also does not apply to:

- the safe routes to school program under Minnesota Statutes, section 174.40
- the local bridge replacement program under Minnesota Statutes, section 174.50
- the local road improvement program under Minnesota Statutes, section 174.52
- highway railroad grade crossing-warning devices replacement
- statewide freight safety improvements
- the airport capital improvement program
- high priority bridges for the trunk highway system

Exemptions

The following activities are not subject to the scoring and documentation requirements of this policy:

- Chip seals, patching and crack sealing of pavements
- Epoxy chip seal wearing courses and crack sealing on bridges
- Painting of bridge steel superstructures
- Bridge expansion joint replacement
- Scour countermeasures
- Culvert lining
- Tunnel repairs
- Sign, signal, lighting, sensor, and guardrail replacement
- Striping
- Legal liabilities requiring capital investment
- Emergency repairs

- Seasonal response (example: fixing winter damage)
- Slope stabilization
- Landscaping and revegetation following major construction projects
- Installation or replacement of fiber optic cables or other transmission lines in state owned right of way
- Installation of solar panels or other energy infrastructure in state owned right of way
- Temporary or research demonstration installations

Key stakeholders with responsibilities under this policy include:

- Commissioner and Senior Leadership Team
- Office of Transportation System Management
- Office of Communications and Public Engagement
- Office of Financial Management
- Offices and Districts
- Specialty and Modal Offices
- Program Managers
- Project Managers
- District Communications and Public Engagement Staff
- Office of Chief Counsel

Definitions

Capital Highway Investment Plan (CHIP)

A document detailing MnDOT's planned capital highway investments for the next ten years on the state highway system. [View a PDF version of the CHIP.](#)

Capital Expenditure

Eligible expenses include land acquisition, predesign, design, construction, major remodeling (if it adds to the value or life of a building and is not of a recurring nature), and other improvements or acquisitions of tangible fixed assets of a capital nature. General operating expenses, overhead, master planning, maintenance, operating costs, and personal property are not qualified expenses. Equipment is not eligible unless purchased and installed upon initial acquisition and construction of a building, expansion or major remodeling and needed for the governmental program to be operated.

Capital Project

A project to purchase, replace, or recondition the physical assets that make up the transportation system and is eligible for capital expenditure.

Indian Country

As defined in 18 United States Code section 1151, Indian country includes reservations, allotments, and dependent Indian communities. Indian country may include off-reservation land.

Note: See the [Indian Country Guidance](#) and the [MnDOT Tribal Map Application](#) for additional information.

State Highway System (see also Trunk Highway System)

All roads consisting of Interstates, US Highways, and State Highways.

State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

A four-year plan that identifies the schedule and funding of transportation projects by state fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). It includes all state and local transportation projects with federal highway and/or federal transit funding along with 100 percent state funded transportation projects. [View more information on the STIP.](#)

Responsibilities

Commissioner and Senior Leadership Team

- Ensure implementation of this policy.
- Ensure programs and processes for evaluation and selection of capital projects, including construction projects on state owned highways, awarding grants for capital projects, or allocation of funding or resources for capital projects, follow the requirements of this policy.

Office of Transportation System Management (OTSM)

- Maintain an accurate and up-to-date Guide to MnDOT Highway Construction Project Selection.
- Collaborate with Program Managers to develop and maintain the Guide to MnDOT Capital Project Selection.
- Provide technical assistance and guidance to districts and program managers.
- Ensure the STIP and CHIP include the score and category or program for each project, when applicable.
- Coordinate with the Office of Communications and Public Engagement to develop and maintain a website with detailed information about MnDOT highway project selection processes and programs, including lists of candidate projects, scores, and reasoning behind selection decisions.

Office of Communications and Public Engagement

- Develop and maintain websites with detailed information about MnDOT project selection processes and programs, including lists of candidate projects, scores, and reasoning behind selection decisions.
- Develop and maintain graphics and other communications materials using plain language to explain and communicate MnDOT's project selection processes.

Office of Financial Management

- For projects in the STIP and CHIP, ensure accurate and complete recording of scores and selection decisions in the Capital Highway Information Management Enterprise System (CHIMES) and reports created by that system, when applicable.

Offices and Districts

Note: These responsibilities apply to districts and those offices responsible for selection decisions and processes.

- Identify, score, and prioritize applicable candidate projects following the direction in the Guide to MnDOT Highway Construction Project Selection and Guide to MnDOT Capital Project Selection.
- Document the reasoning behind project selection decisions.
- Coordinate with Tribal Nations on projects in Indian Country.

Specialty and Modal Offices

- Provide guidance and technical assistance to districts and program managers.

Program Managers

- Collaborate with OTSM to develop and maintain detailed documentation on the scoring criteria and selection process for the applicable program consistent with the requirements of this policy.
- Document the reasoning behind project selection decisions.
- As needed, review and revise the criteria and methodology for each project selection process to incorporate new research and guidance, changes in state or federal law, updates to state plans or policies, stakeholder feedback, and lessons learned from implementing the project selection policy. Post the revised criteria and methodology and note how the changes will affect projects that have already been selected, if at all.
- Coordinate with the Office of Communications and Public Engagement to develop and maintain a website with detailed information about MnDOT project selection processes and programs, including lists of candidate projects, scores, and reasoning behind selection decisions.
- For projects not in the STIP and CHIP, ensure accurate and complete recording of scores and selection decisions in the designated location identified in the MnDOT Records Retention Schedule.

Program Managers, Project Managers, and District Communications and Public Engagement Staff

- Understand this policy and the processes identified in the Guide to MnDOT Highway Construction Project Selection and Guide to MnDOT Capital Project Selection to sufficiently to explain the process to stakeholders, Tribal Nations officials, and the general public.
- When requested, provide information regarding the score and reasoning behind project selection decisions.

Office of the Chief Counsel

- Develop and maintain the MnDOT Records Retention Schedule and provide records retention guidance for project scores, reasoning, and other documentation related to this policy.

Policy Owner (Assistant Commissioner –Sustainability, Planning, and Program Management)

- Review the policy every two years, or sooner as necessary, to ensure the policy remains up-to-date.
- Ensure guidance and other documents associated with the policy remain current.
- Monitor state, federal, enterprise, agency, or other requirements that apply to the policy or procedures.
- Ensure the policy and procedures remain compliant with all state, federal, enterprise, agency, or other requirements and that necessary approvals by state or federal agencies are obtained before changes to the policy or procedures are implemented.
- Work with the Policy Coordinator to revise the policy and/or confirm its accuracy.
- Communicate policy revisions, reviews, and retirements to stakeholders.

Resources & Related Information

Processes, Procedures, and Instructions

- [Guide to MnDOT Highway Construction Project Selection](#)
- [Guide to MnDOT Capital Project Selection](#)

Resources

- [Minnesota Laws 2017, First Special Session, Chapter 3, Article 3, Section 124](#)
- [Minnesota Laws 2021, First Special Session, Chapter 5, Article 4, Section 134](#)
- [MnDOT Grant Management Policy](#)

- [2 CFR 200](#)
- [MnDOT Project Selection website](#)
- [MnDOT Planning & Programming website](#)
- [State Transportation Improvement Program \(STIP\)](#)
- [10-Year Capital Highway Investment Plan](#)
- [Minnesota GO](#)
- [Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan \(SMTP\)](#)
- [State Highway Investment Plan \(MnSHIP\)](#)
- Business Data Catalog (BDC) – accessible from employee Intranet
- MnDOT's [Policy Website](#)

History & Updates

Initial Adoption

Date: 11-30-2018

Comments: Policy #OP016 adopted

First Revision

Date: 11-1-2022

Comments: Revised policy to incorporate programs from 2021 Session Law; changed policy owner to AC – MPPM to encompass all offices affected by policy; renumbered as #OE016

Authorization

Policy Owner:

Electronic Signature: _____
Assistant Commissioner – Sustainability, Planning, and Program Management

Governance Committee has reviewed this policy and recommends approval:

Electronic Signature: _____
Governance Committee Chair

Responsible Senior Officer:

Electronic Signature: _____
Deputy Commissioner – Chief Engineer

Policy Review

This policy has been reviewed by the Policy Owner, the policy content is current, and no significant modifications are needed. Minor modifications have been noted in the “Comments” section.

First Review

Policy Owner Signature and Date: _____

Comments:

Second Review

Policy Owner Signature and Date: _____

Comments: