



& Associates

M E M O R A N D U M

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FROM: DJ Heffernan

DATE: July 27, 2005

RE: Statewide Project Eligibility Criteria Evaluation

Purpose and Methodology Overview

This memo summarizes research conclusions regarding the application of Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) program eligibility and prioritization criteria that the Commission approved on November 17, 2003. The criteria were adopted to help ODOT program managers and Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and other regional or statewide advisory groups that nominate projects for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Criteria were established for screening potential projects in three highway-related programs: Modernization, Pavement Preservation, and Bridge Preservation. Separate criteria were adopted for Construction STIP (C-STIP) projects. For the 2006-09 STIP process that is nearing completion, Development STIP (D-STIP) criteria were adopted along with the three C-STIP program criteria. The eligibility criteria and prioritization factors for the 2006-09 STIP are listed in the *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors* chapter of the Draft 2006-09 STIP document.

The research conducted for this report is intended to help inform the development of 2008-11 C-STIP and D-STIP criteria. Research methods included:

- Reviewing documentation of the use of criteria in Project Identification and Summary reports prepared by program and region staff members for the 2006-09 STIP;
- Summarizing comments about the use and effectiveness of criteria that were recorded in meetings with region staff and STIP advisory participants in the fall and winter of 2004;
- Reviewing preliminary findings and eliciting comments from region staff and program managers about the use of criteria in telephone interviews conducted in the June of 2005.

The following section of this report explains conclusions and recommendations based on the results of the research described above. Later sections then detail the findings of each of these methods by ODOT region or program.

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Land Use Planning Transportation Planning Project Management

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
- *Page 2*

Research Conclusions/Recommendations

- For the Construction-STIP, the adoption of the statewide criteria have had a significant effect on the project selection process for Modernization (MOD) and Bridge programs but less impact on the Pavement Preservation program.
- For the C-STIP, there is significant variation in the use of statewide criteria by the regions and significant variation in how their use is reported. The contrast is evident by comparing the MOD program for Regions 3 and 4. Neither region prepared detailed Project Identification and Summary reports for their MOD projects, but their use of the statewide criteria and prioritization factors in their project selection process could not be more different.
 - Region 3 MOD projects are programmed using a competitive application process and an objective technical scoring system. The process differs slightly for their two areas (RVACT and SWACT) but both processes involve a rigorous project screening and scoring system using technical criteria, which encompass all the statewide eligibility and prioritization factors and many other factors. Project merit largely determines the Region 3 MOD program. Region 3 could easily document how they employed the statewide criteria in their summary reports by attaching their project rating sheets and ACT meeting summaries.
 - Region 4 does not refine or objectify the statewide criteria but rather uses them generally to discuss attributes and merits of candidate projects. Eligibility criteria help screen out projects, and then a consensus process is used to develop a recommended program. Prioritization factors are considered in the discussion as necessary. Given they do not use an objective rating system, Region 4 would need to reconstruct the consideration of the criteria from meeting summaries and describe it in narrative.
 - It is difficult to answer whether or not one process is “better” without asking if the process appears responsible for delivering a better set of projects; it is beyond the scope of this review to assess the relative strength of each region’s MOD program. The Region 3 process, however, clearly did a better job of documenting how criteria were used to select projects, even if that documentation is not fully represented in their Project Identification and Summary Reports.
- The Project Summary Reports in Regions 1, 2, and 4 were not prepared consistently in documenting how the statewide criteria were used to select MOD projects. The Summary Reports in Region 3 alone do not demonstrate how the criteria were used but the region’s companion project rating and scoring system documents the use of criteria, both local and statewide, in detail. Project Summary Reports in Region 5 document how the criteria were used in the selection process consistently; the fact that all reports were prepared by the same person had a significant effect on this outcome. To the extent the agency feels its Project Identification and Summary reports need to be developed more consistently, better training likely would help deliver that result.
- For Pavement Preservation, the eligibility criteria and prioritization factors appear to be viewed almost universally as having had very little effect on project selection. This is because project eligibility is the same as it was before November of 2003 and the prioritization factors are generally consistent with the program mission. So to date, they have had little if any effect on project selection. Staff said the decision to move to an overall fair or better system rating and mileage targets played a much more important role

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
 - *Page 3*
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in project selection than the prioritization factors. Most regions stated, however, that they expect local leverage will have greater effect on the project selection in future STIP cycles.

- For Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation, the eligibility criteria have not had an effect on the pool of candidate projects (i.e. which projects are considered). But the prioritization factors have altered which projects are selected and/or the treatments chosen to address needs. Specifically, the program is much more focused on corridors and on treatments that protect freight mobility than would have been the case prior to November of 2003.
- The leverage prioritization factor, which is listed in all three C-STIP program factors, was mentioned most frequently in the interviews and meetings we attended as affecting project selection. In most regions, general statements were made to this effect, and Region 3 provided persuasive documentation that a competitive objective-based system which employs a leverage factor leads to the infusion of additional resources.
- For the Development-STIP, use of the program and reasons for project selection varies from region to region.
 - In Regions 1 and 2, the D-STIP is used to program projects that are viewed by advisory bodies as regionally significant but are not ready for the C-STIP either because of project complexity and/or lack of funding. The complexity of projects in these regions combined with other demands placed on planning resources make it difficult to move major projects to the point they are ready to proceed without spending part of the Region's MOD funds on project readiness. In addition, because the cost of system investment needs is so much greater than available funding in Regions 1 and 2, there is a perception that the Region's MOD program contribution plays a secondary role in financing system improvements needs. There is not a perception that D-STIP spending is robbing the region of critical resources that could be better spent on capital projects, so there is less reluctance to use the D-STIP. Region 2 noted in particular that this tack is taken with earmark projects, which tend to be large, complex and so expensive that including them in the D-STIP is one way to keep them moving forward until funding is available.
 - This perspective about the D-STIP is not shared in the other regions. Regions 3, 4, and 5 use the D-STIP sparingly preferring to program as much of their MOD allocation as possible on "brick and mortar" projects and address readiness issues using resources that are not programmed through the STIP (e.g. planning funds).
 - There were no direct comments about the effectiveness of the prioritization criteria in selecting D-STIP projects. It is apparent, however, that D-STIP projects which are either on the list of projects of statewide significance or are associated with a federal earmark clearly meet the established eligibility criteria. Because Regions 3, 4, and 5 use the D-STIP sparingly, there has not been a need to use the prioritization factors to choose between competing D-STIP candidate projects. In Region 2, the ACTs help decide which projects to fund through the D-STIP focusing primarily on earmark projects and on projects in MPOs. In Region 1, D-STIP projects are coordinated with Metro and primarily focus on projects on the state system in urban areas that have a high priority in the RTP.

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
- *Page 4*

Review of Project Identification and Summary Reports

AEA staff reviewed the regions' Project Identification and Summary Reports for the 2006-09 STIP to assess how the Oregon Transportation Commission's adopted statewide project eligibility criteria and prioritization factors for the Development STIP (D-STIP) and Construction STIP (C-STIP) affected project selection. A checklist was developed and was used to evaluate the Summary Reports. The checklist covered the following issues:

- Use of OTC criteria.
- Thoroughness of explanation given for each criterion.
- Consistency in reporting within each region.
- Consistency in reporting between the regions.
- ACT involvement and additional criteria used.

General Comments

The way in which eligibility criteria and prioritization factors were used varied significantly between the different regions. In addition, the amount of explanation given for how each criterion or factor applied to selected projects varied widely between programs and from region to region. Several regions followed the *Project Identification and Summary Report Guidance* document closely; they describe the applicable criteria and factors and offer a brief explanation of how the given project satisfied them. Other regions seemed to focus on one or two criteria (e.g. TSP and OHP consistency) and less on others. Some summary reports looked on the criteria and prioritization factors as items to select from a menu for demonstrating that each project achieved some measure of conformity with one or more statewide objectives.

The reports in Regions 2 and 3 consistently mentioned how the ACT used additional criteria in their project selection process, while the individual project reports from other regions do not mention the ACT's involvement in evaluating projects for compliance with statewide criteria. For the most part, this is a documentation oversight, not a procedural oversight. In all regions, the ACTs were aware of and made use of the statewide criteria when selecting projects. There was considerable variation in how the ACTs used the prioritization criteria and their use of additional threshold criteria or prioritization factors. In some cases, there were significant variations in the use of the criteria between ACTs in the same region. Reporting format and detail were generally consistent within each region, except for Region 2. Documentation of how the criteria and factors were applied project by project was weaker in Regions 1 and 4 than in the other regions.

D-STIP and Modernization (MOD)

Region 1

The reports for Region 1 covered most of the OTC criteria generally and provided a brief discussion of how the criteria would be met by the particular project. Readiness, one of the prioritization factors for MOD projects, was frequently mentioned in the reports as a reason for selection. ACT involvement is significant in Columbia County and parts of Washington County that program MOD projects through the NWACT using statewide criteria and additional local criteria developed by the jurisdictions in these counties. Other parts of Region 1 do not have ACTs. Region 1 prepared a coversheet for their D-STIP and C-STIP program that closely followed the guideline format developed by the Transportation Development Division (TDD).

Region 2

We reviewed 23 Summary Reports for Region 2, approximately half D-STIP projects and half C-STIP MOD projects. This region had the most variation in report format and amount of detail given. Some reports stated that all criteria were satisfied, but did not provide any back-up explanation. Other

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
 - *Page 5*
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reports provided more discussion but did not necessarily touch on each criterion. Inconsistencies in reporting appeared to be, at least in part, due to different project manager styles. Generally speaking, most reports and the cover sheet appeared to be following the guidance document.

The ACTs in Region 2 augmented the statewide criteria either by adding new criteria or refining the OTC criteria. For example the reports for MOD projects recommended by the Mid Willamette ACT sometimes referenced two additional criteria to address safety and congestion concerns; if additional criteria were not used, this was stated in the report. Some reports also appeared to give TSP consistency a higher priority based on the amount of discussion on this topic (see Table 1 attached).

In addition to the Summary Reports, Region 2 provided a matrix listing potential D-STIP and C-STIP projects. The matrix contained a description of each project, a “Y” or “N” (yes or no) for each eligibility criterion, and a scoring system for each prioritization factor that consisted of plus (+) signs to show compatibility with each factor. Projects were then given a ranking of low, medium, or high based on how they scored in the matrix. Another matrix was provided that gave a detailed analysis of how each C-STIP project matched with Oregon Highway Plan (OHP) and, if applicable, the Region Transportation Plan (RTP) Transportation System Improvement policies. These matrices were not mentioned in the Summary Reports, but were treated as attachments to provide further clarification of how projects were selected.

Region 3

Region 3 took a different approach to preparing the Summary Reports for MOD projects. The reports themselves tend to be brief and provide only a short discussion of the criteria. The Region, however, uses an extensive application process in which all potential projects are evaluated based on a common set of criteria. These criteria include all the OTC eligibility criteria and prioritization factors, as well as additional criteria set forth by the ACTs. The applications are reviewed and projects are assigned a score that is then used to rank the projects for prioritization. These scores are highlighted in the Summary Reports.

Region 3 also provided a brief cover sheet using the guidance format, a detailed project rating matrix, similar to Region 2, and copies of the application required for D-STIP and C-STIP project consideration.

Region 4

Summary Reports for Region 4 were consistent in style and format, but tended to be brief. Consistency with the local transportation system plan (TSP), OHP, and/or other transportation plans was discussed in detail, while the remaining criteria were not mentioned. ACT involvement and the use of additional criteria was not discussed. The cover sheet followed the guidance format and also was brief in explanation. There were no charts or matrices available that helped explain how the criteria were used for project selection.

Region 5

Region 5 prepared their Summary Reports using a consistent format. Most criteria were mentioned and a brief discussion was given for each. If additional ACT criteria were used in the process, this was stated in the report with an explanation of how/why they were used.

Many of the reports referenced the adopted *Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors*, for the 2006-09 STIP cycle. A chart was provided that listed each MOD project and briefly discussed suitability with the eligibility criteria. A similar chart was not provided for the prioritization factors

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
- *Page 6*

but the narrative described how the prioritization factors were applied. The program cover sheet followed the TDD guidelines and provided some discussion for each section.

Preservation Projects

Each region submitted a Preservation Project Identification and Summary report, and the reports were fairly consistent among the regions. Because Pavement Preservation is a management system driven project selection process, the eligibility criterion (identification of the project in the Pavement Management System) did not require much discussion in the summary reports. The prioritization factors (readiness, OHP consistency, and leverage) are mentioned in the reports, and an explanation of suitability is provided. Of the three factors, leverage was least mentioned. The projects were summarized together in one report with a programmatic assessment for how the projects complied with the adopted Prioritization Factors.

Bridge Projects

One Bridge Project Identification and Summary Report was submitted for all regions, and included discussion of the 15 bridges identified for replacement or repair using the state's Bridge Rehabilitation and Replacement Program. The two eligibility criteria are listed in the report along with a summary of how the 15 projects comply with them. Individual bridge projects are not described, but all were categorized as load restricted, in need of repair to avoid restrictions, bridges that preserve freight corridors, or in need of other repairs.

The prioritization factors also are listed with a discussion of how they were used in project selection. Freight mobility was the primary issue being addressed by most projects. The prioritization factors favoring these projects include consistency with the Bridge Options Report and leveraging public benefits. A detailed explanation was given regarding how the projects generally satisfy these criteria. The reports illustrate programmatically how individual projects were analyzed and the program management system that is relied on to help select projects uses an elaborate matrix rating system to compare and prioritize projects. That system includes the statewide prioritization factors along with other selection factors.

Program Managers and Highway Regions STIP Process Review Comments

Between July, 2004 and January, 2005, Angelo Eaton & Associates and TDD staff met with ODOT program managers and with Highway Division region staff and local advisory representatives to discuss the STIP development process. The purpose of those meetings was to confirm assumptions about the STIP development process and to elicit information about the process each region uses to develop their STIP program. Program manager meetings lasted 45 minutes to an hour while meetings with the regions typically spanned an entire day. In most meetings, some part of the discussion focused directly or indirectly on the effect that the OTC criteria had on the project selection process. A summary of the comments recorded in the meetings follows.

General Comments

One item that came up in every region meeting, particularly from ACT members and MPO representatives, was that the timing for approval of the criteria, and for program and region allocations, is critical. A one or two month delay puts enormous pressure on the ACTs to incorporate the criteria into their process and respond in a timely manner. The criteria were not criticized for complicating the selection process but rather for adding a step in the preliminary development process that could result in delays later on in the process. The result is a rushed advisory and public participation process.

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
- *Page 7*

Some ACT members stated that the criteria seem to be having the effect of sustaining region priorities from one STIP cycle to the next, which they felt had been a problem in the past. But other regions attributed continuity in region priorities to continuity in ACT membership and having well established working relationships between ACT members and the region. Some ACT members expressed an opposite concern: changes in the statewide criteria would interfere with the ACT's ability to formulate and implement strategic investment plans.

Development STIP

Most of the comments concerning the Development STIP came in the meetings with region staff members. There were two dominant views expressed. In Regions 3, 4, and 5, commentators said they use the D-STIP infrequently preferring to spend limited modernization funds for "brick and mortar" projects. Planning work for STIP projects in these regions, including preparation of refinement plans and preliminary environmental reviews, is frequently funded using the region's planning allocation, which is not programmed through the STIP. Preliminary engineering and environmental work on a few large multi-year projects is programmed through the D-STIP in these regions, but the prevailing view was that D-STIP projects must compete with C-STIP projects and it is up to the ACTs to decide which projects had priority. For example, Region 3, which uses a competitive application process to select Modernization projects, augments OTC criteria with local criteria approved by their ACTs and the local criteria place a high degree of emphasis on resolving identified needs.

Conversely, Regions 1 and 2 use the D-STIP extensively and implied that the scale of problems is so significant relative to funding availability, particularly for MOD projects, that the D-STIP is where a significant percentage of MOD dollars are programmed in anticipation of securing earmarks or other special financing needed to build projects. This view was especially prevalent in Region 1. Local government representatives expressed support for continuing to use the D-STIP for investigative studies and refinement planning. An alternative concern also was expressed – that project planning leads to expectations the projects will be constructed and regions that invest heavily in development projects may find they have many more projects ready than there is available funding. There were no direct comments about the effectiveness of the prioritization criteria in selecting D-STIP projects.

Modernization

There were no concerns expressed concerning project eligibility requirements for the MOD program. The regions and ACTs all seemed supportive of the idea that projects need to be in adopted TSPs to be considered. One participant commented, "If it is that important a project, amending a TSP should not be too difficult a hurdle to secure state support for a MOD project".

Most regions use the statewide prioritization factors in combination with local criteria to prioritize projects. The statewide factors are not necessarily applied first, but certain factors function as threshold screens, notably readiness to proceed, supporting the Oregon Highway Plan, and ability to secure environmental approval. Leveraging other public funds and benefits is a factor that seems to be weighed along-side local factors such as geographic equity, community size, private as well as public contributions, job creation, multi-modal benefits, and congestion relief in screening projects. Community size and leverage were considered together; there is recognition that smaller communities have less ability to raise local match for projects. We heard many times that this fact is considered in the prioritization process. In most regions, leverage seems to be used more as a qualitative measure in sorting and prioritizing projects.

In Region 3, which uses a competitive selection process, points are awarded for how well projects meet statewide and local criteria. So, all else being equal, local leverage often makes the difference between

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
- *Page 8*

which projects are funded and which are not. Even in their process, however, there is recognition that small communities have limited ability to raise local match and consideration is given to other public benefits or types of leverage that small communities may contribute. So while local leverage plays an important role in all the regions, attempts are made to balance the importance of this factor with other public benefit factors.

There were direct and indirect comments made about the value of some criteria given problems with project scoping. One ACT member commented that the readiness to proceed criteria lose credibility when project cost estimates change by factors of 2 or 5 or 10 from one STIP cycle to the next. By extension, it is difficult to put much faith in the leverage criteria relative to project scale when cost estimates change by orders of magnitude from the time of project rating to construction. It is difficult to say whether or not opening the Region Tech Centers will help resolve this issue, but there was frequent mention of scoping cycles being out of sync with STIP programming cycles.

Overall, most regions stated directly or implied that the criteria help “objectify” the project selection process and provide a rationale for their selections. Regions 3 and 5 use a “high, medium, low” rating system for how well each project meets each factor. Regions 1, 2, and 4 place a high degree of emphasis on leverage and on reducing congestion, which promotes the state objective to maintain mobility. But all regions also made the comment that available funding is so limited in comparison to identified needs that the amount of process associated with the MOD program seems out of balance with the outcome.

Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation

The program manager meeting summary did not reveal difficulties meeting the approved statewide eligibility criteria or using the prioritization factors. We did not hear comments in the region meetings about using the statewide criteria to evaluate bridge projects. There were references to combining bridge projects with funding from other programs, such as preservation and safety, which demonstrates sensitivity to the leverage criteria, but the regions have always tried to stretch resources and combine projects when practical, so it is difficult to say whether or not the leverage factor has significantly affected programming decisions. All factors are represented in the project selection process for the Bridge program.

Pavement Preservation

The program manager meeting summary did not reveal difficulties meeting the approved statewide eligibility criteria or prioritization factors. We did not hear comments from the regions about any difficulty using the prioritization factors. The regions all referenced steps they take to combine preservation projects with local funding or state funding from other programs, which demonstrates sensitivity to the leverage factor. Some regions expressed growing difficulty meeting preservation targets with available resources, which may explain the comment we heard from several region traffic and operations managers that local leverage may play a more significant role in selecting future preservation projects. This expectation seemed especially prevalent in reference to preservation projects in urbanized areas.

Program Managers and Highway Region Follow-up Interviews

As a follow-up to the research work, AEA and TDD staff interviewed program staff and highway region personnel to ask their specific opinion about how the criteria and factors affected the project selection process. The following discussion summarizes those comments.

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
- *Page 9*

Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation

We spoke with the State Bridge Program manager and two staff members who participated in the bridge programming process for the 06-09 STIP. Staff indicated that the eligibility criteria work well as threshold criteria for STIP project consideration. The criteria are virtually identical to the measures previously used to identify candidate projects so the eligibility review has not changed significantly since the criteria were adopted. They stated, however, that the prioritization factors had affected project selection by moving away from a “worst first” approach to bridge system management to a more complex project selection process. Staff noted that given the Bridge Options Report emphasis on corridors, especially corridors that serve freight movement, more bridge projects have been selected on freight routes.

For the state bridge program, the management system uses a twelve-factor matrix to evaluate prospective bridge projects. The matrix, either directly or indirectly, address the statewide prioritization factors. Since the statewide criteria were adopted, staff noted that the treatments selected to address some projects are different than they might previously have been. For example, a bridge that may have been considered for replacement in the past might be recommended for a maintenance treatment in order to free up resources for another project that is highly rated using the prioritization factors. Ultimately, the State Bridge Engineer and the Bridge Oversight Committee balance public safety issues with other considerations in developing the state bridge improvement program.

For the Local Bridge Program, the statewide prioritization factors are represented in the project evaluation process but the project rating system is different from the one used for the state’s Bridge Rehabilitation and Replacement Program. In Local Bridge, the scoring system “rolls-up” all the factors into a single project score. The projects are then reviewed by a statewide committee that includes representatives of local jurisdictions. The committee sometimes will consider non-technical issues, such as geographic equity, in addition to other factors when developing the local bridge STIP program.

Program staff members said the process is working. They emphasized the need to maintain flexibility in the criteria and prioritization factors so that professional judgment on how to make the most efficient use of available resources determines project selection. The concern is that if the criteria become too specific, program resources could be restricted to a select list of projects and would not allow for creative engineering and maintenance solutions that are now employed to preserve “lower profile” facilities. In the long run, a more proscriptive set of criteria likely would reduce maintenance investment in low-priority facilities, which would shorten their service life and ultimately result in higher overall program costs.

Pavement Preservation

We spoke with the Pavement Preservation program staff responsible for administering the pavement management system across the state. Staff indicated the eligibility criteria have not changed which projects become candidates for preservation work and also noted that it is difficult to tell if the prioritization criteria are having an effect. Regarding the three prioritization factors, project readiness is not much of an issue on preservation projects. All candidate projects are scoped and the steps needed to get projects ready are easily accomplished in the STIP cycle. The only issue that may result in delay is when other resources, such as safety or culvert replacement, are used to augment a preservation project. But for the pavement work itself, readiness is not an issue. The factor that directs favor to projects that best support policies in the highway plan does not often come into play because 90% of program funding is spent on interstate and state highway routes, so all Highway Plan policies referenced by this factor are supported by projects on those routes. With regard to projects

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
- *Page 10*

that leverage other funds or benefits, all regions try to match projects in proximity to one another, so preservation projects are frequently programmed jointly with safety or bike or transportation enhancement funds. Staff did not feel that leverage was significantly altering project selection but it could in future.

Some highway regions tend to scrutinize the pavement management system recommendations more than others, particularly in regions where either environmental or traffic conditions make pavement condition forecasting more difficult, and in those regions the prioritization factors may help make the case for an alternative project or for a different type of treatment. In Region 5, for example, project readiness was raised as a basis for delaying a preservation project because complex utility installations were impacted by the project. For the most part, however, the priority factors have not significantly altered project selection. Staff stated that the criteria for Preservation in the 06-09 STIP cycle worked well and would support using them again for the 08-11 update with no changes.

The program's bigger challenge is not which projects are selected for treatment but rather increasing difficulty meeting pavement condition goals given rising costs, which can be attributed to three factors: 1) tougher working environments, especially in urban areas that now are subject to more frequent treatment cycles; 2) a gradual increase in low volume road projects, which were removed from the preservation program 15 years ago and now need more expensive treatments than can be delivered through the maintenance program; 3) a compounding problem where pavements that were treated using shorter-duration treatments in order to meet mileage targets need attention again at the same time that other pavement sections are reaching the end of their service life. The prior decision to use a shorter duration treatment has altered the treatment cycle for some roads adding to the number of miles that fall below a desired condition.

Region 1

For Modernization (MOD), Region 1 uses an allocation process that programs around 80% of the regions MOD funds in the Metro area and 20% in other parts of the region. Region 1 staff indicated that the use of the criteria varies depending on location and program. The OTC criteria are used by the NWACT to set priorities and select projects in the northern part of Washington County and in Columbia County. In addition to the OTC approved criteria, the NWACT have their own prioritization factors that they use to evaluate and prioritize projects (see ACT criteria summary attached). So in this part of Region 1, the use of the criteria and factors is quite formal. Projects are scored based on how well they meet statewide and NWACT criteria.

In other parts of Region 1, however, the use of the criteria and prioritization factors is less formal. In Hood River County, Region 1 staff meet with city and county officials to get a sense for county priorities and needs. The criteria are used informally to make sure county projects are eligible for MOD funding. The prioritization factors are considered when there is a need to set priorities among competing projects of interest. This same approach is followed in other rural areas of Region 1, where three "Coordinating Committees" meet with Region 1 staff and work out their transportation priorities for MOD projects. Region staff that participate in these programming meetings include planners, Project Delivery Team members, and public involvement specialists.

In the Metro Area, the statewide criteria are used to screen projects for eligibility. Priorities are largely determined in the Metro Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Candidate projects are selected from the financially constrained RTP list in consultation with Metro's TPAC and JPACT committees. Prioritization factors may be used to help select between competing projects of interest. With MOD resources declining, Metro is seeking a greater role in programming the Region 1 MOD funds by

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
- *Page 11*

reaching agreement in advance on metropolitan area priorities, but there is no formal process in which the statewide criteria are used in a comparative analysis to select among candidate projects. Rather, the statewide criteria are applied project by project to make sure statewide objectives are being addressed by each project.

Region 1 staff commented that they are trying to do a better job of coordinating their STIP programming process with the Metro process but the timing, criteria and process for statewide project selection is not the same as what is used in the Metro programming process. This makes the direct application of the statewide criteria difficult.

With regard to Pavement Preservation projects, Region 1 staff commented that local leverage and project readiness factors have influenced the pavement program in the region, but in a subtly different way than one might expect. Local governments in Region 1 generally do not favor pave-only projects and want preservation projects that also help address other needs, such as improving pedestrian safety, adding bike lanes, and addressing operational problems. Projects are increasingly likely to attract local leverage when they do more than just address a pavement condition, but in so doing, the Region faces increased difficulty meeting mileage targets. In urban areas, the desire for functional amenities like bike lanes, sidewalks, and transit stops affect project readiness in the eyes of local jurisdictions and hence readiness is used like an eligibility screen.

Staff also noted that the shift from a “worst-first” approach to “fair-or-better” targets resulted in the region choosing a different mix of projects. They also noted, however, that while overall conditions have not declined as rapidly as they might have with a “worst-first” approach, pavement conditions in Region 1 have not improved as much as they have in other regions because the cost per mile is higher and because treatments wear faster because of higher traffic volumes, especially freight traffic. They also stated that the segments that remain and need treatment are more expensive per lane mile because so many are located in urban settings. Urban transfers and other “creative” solutions are falling away because most of the segments for which these solutions are viable have been exercised. The segments that remain are tough ones to find shared solutions. There are social justice issues and liability issues that are making it increasingly difficult to put off undertaking these expensive projects. They suggested that preservation targets be refined to distinguish target pavement conditions and mileage targets for urban facilities and rural facilities so that project selection in these different environments can be tailored accordingly.

Staff had no comments on the selection of bridge projects.

Region 2

Region 2 staff commented that the statewide criteria had a significant influence on the selection of Modernization (MOD) projects but little impact on preservation projects. The region had little opportunity to review bridge projects and could not comment on the effectiveness of the eligibility criteria or prioritization factors for selecting local or state bridge projects. They noted, however, that the Bridge Options Report recommendations and leverage factors had the effect of targeting bridge projects in freight corridors.

With regard to MOD, there are three ACTs in Region 2 plus Lane County. The ACTs and Lane County used the eligibility criteria as a pass/fail screen for projects. ACTs reviewed the list of eligible projects and agreed on a short list to scope. About half again as many projects were scoped as there was funding available. All the ACTs used the statewide prioritization factors to rate projects by refining the meaning of the factors so they could be used in an objective rating system to compare the projects. Some ACTs also developed additional factors to help rate the projects. Staff commented that

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
- *Page 12*

this system of assigning points and objective weights to projects eliminated some of the “provincial preferences” that plagued the selection process in the past.

Staff commented that it was sometimes difficult for ACT members to compare complex vs. straightforward projects. They also commented that project readiness sometimes proved a difficult factor to use because newer ACT members in particular do not have an understanding for how long it takes to get projects through environmental review and design. The readiness factor in the end influenced the project list for the D-STIP, but earmarks (current and anticipated) also have a significant effect on the D-STIP list. In response to a question about why there appeared to be so much variation in the content and appearance of the summary reports in Region 2, staff replied that with four areas and many staff preparing the reports, it was hard to achieve consistency. They also noted there was limited training and that the expectation for the content of the reports were not clear. But it is a new process and will improve over time. They raised a concern that the reports should not end up being like a land use findings report. Their preparation needs to add value to the mission of being able to explain to the public why resources are being allocated to some projects and not others. They should be able to accomplish that objective without spending hours of staff time preparing elaborate justification for selecting certain projects.

With regard to Pavement Preservation projects, staff members commented that they did not see the value of preparing individual project identification and summary reports and want the review to remain programmatic. They also noted that the criteria and prioritization factors have not changed the program in any significant way. The program’s objective is to preserve the condition of pavement and project selection is based on objective factors that have not changed so the prioritization factors have little effect on the projects selected for treatment. They suggested that a programmatic report should be sufficient to document that the criteria are being used properly and that projects are being selected consistent with program objectives.

Region 3

The Modernization program (MOD) in Region 3 relies extensively on the use of eligibility criteria and prioritizing factors to develop the MOD program in the STIP. Region 3 solicits applications from local governments and from ODOT. These applications are evaluated using a series of criteria that encompass all the adopted statewide eligibility criteria and prioritization factors plus additional factors developed by the ACTs. The process precedes the adoption of statewide criteria by at least one STIP cycle. In 2003, the Region compared the criteria used by their staff and the ACTs to prioritize projects to make sure they were consistent with the adopted statewide criteria. Several adjustments were made to their evaluation process as a result of that analysis. Every application is scored using a 100 point system that rates projects against objective measures. The staff rating is reviewed by a technical committee and by the ACT who determine a prioritization ranking for all the projects. In the Rogue Valley area, the MPO uses the same technical criteria and process to rate projects that are being considered for the TIP. The ACTs develop final recommendations. The region has developed a process for reconciling differences between the MPO the ACT, and for reconciling the regional program. There is a high level of documentation regarding how recommended projects address each area criterion and, by extension, each statewide criterion.

For the preservation program, projects are evaluated for compliance with statewide criteria internally, but projects are not compared against each other in a competitive manner as they are for MOD. As in other regions, the pavement management system determines eligible candidate projects. Readiness and leverage play a role in determining project selection and timing, but the same factors were in use prior

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
- *Page 13*

to adoption of the statewide criteria and prioritization factors. Consequently, the criteria and factors have not significantly changed the character of preservation projects being programmed in Region 3.

Region 4

Region 4 staff indicated that the eligibility criteria and prioritization factors helped focus the evaluation of candidate projects based on comparative attributes, but they did not find it necessary to use the criteria or factors in a systematic way (like the point systems used in other regions) to prioritize projects. For the MOD program, the ACTs did not add factors to those approved by the OTC nor did they redefine the factors or assign points to projects based on the relative merits of each project. Rather, ACT members considered the criteria and factors generally in deciding which projects were candidates for funding and which of the candidate projects best met the needs of the region and the objectives of the program. The MOD program selection process in Region 4 is a collaborative one, made possible in part because all local governments, federal partners, and tribal entities are represented on the ACTs. Projects must be in approved local TSPs to be considered for MOD funding, and only projects that can be constructed during the STIP cycle are considered for the C-STIP. Project readiness (completed EA and preliminary design) works more like a threshold criteria than a prioritization factor; projects that are not ready are not scoped. And given the limited funding available, projects that would consume all available resources are not scoped because they cannot be completed in a single STIP cycle. Local leverage is considered important and is responsible for elevating some projects. The ACT members found it difficult to apply the Oregon Highway Plan factor to modernization projects because all candidate projects are presumed to advance OHP policies. This factor was considered to be too general to use in prioritizing projects. In summary, the relative size of the C-STIP program (only five projects in the 06-09 STIP), the collaborative nature of the process, and the long working history of ACT members allows Region 4 to apply the criteria in a more general manner than other regions.

For the Preservation program, readiness and local leverage played some role in prioritizing projects but mostly affected project timing. The region programs preservation dollars to meet pavement condition goals and has not found it necessary to use a rigorous project rating system for deciding how to prioritize paving projects.

The region had virtually no role in selecting bridge projects and had no comment on bridge criteria or prioritization factors.

Region 5

For Modernization, Region 5 used the eligibility criteria and prioritization factors in a systematic assessment process. Staff said that ACT members initially felt the criteria and factors were too general to apply so they worked to refine the meaning of the criteria and in that way came up with measures they could use to screen projects. The NEACT and SEACT used eligibility criteria to determine candidate projects and then used refined prioritization factors to rank candidate projects in a scoring matrix. For example, NEACT rated candidate projects that could be ready to proceed within 12 months high, those that could be ready in 13 to 36 months medium, and those that would not be ready to construct for more than 36 months low. Similar scoring methods were developed for the other prioritization factors. In NEACT, leverage proved most important in determining project selection. In SEACT, the eligibility criteria proved crucial in selecting projects because they only found one candidate project that met the eligibility criteria.

For preservation, Tech Services staff and district staff met with pavement management system staff to review candidate projects and “negotiated” a program list. All candidate projects scoped were deemed

- *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*
- *Page 14*

to meet project eligibility criteria because they were identified through the PMS program. The prioritization factors played a minor role in project timing but did not have significant influence in project selection. For example, one pavement project was delayed for readiness reasons because an impact on underground utilities that was discovered during scoping resulted in a longer construction period, so the project was delayed to the end of the STIP cycle. Otherwise, the criteria were not considered to have a significant impact in prioritizing projects.

• *Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors Memorandum - continued*

• *Page 15*

Table 1 - Area Commissions on Transportation Prioritization Factors

Region	ACT	System	Additional Criteria Used
Region 2	Northwest	Point system for prioritization	System-wide congestion (25 pts) Economic and community development (25 pts) Safety (20 pts) Community partnership (10 pts) "Connect Oregon" (20 pts)
	Mid-Willamette Valley	Pass/fail for eligibility criteria Point system for prioritization	Congestion Transportation safety
	Cascades West	NA	None
	Lane County	Scoring system (non-weighted)	Supports RTP land use policies Supports RTP TDM policies Supports RTP TSI policies Supports RTP finance policies
Region 3	Rogue Valley Southwest	Point system	Efficient utilization of existing and future infrastructure Use of transportation investments to foster compact livable communities Use of transportation investments to foster economic opportunities Access to alternative modes of transportation and reduced reliance on SOV's Provide environmentally sensitive transportation options Optimize safety on the transportation system Project readiness (leverage)
Region 4	Central Oregon	NA	None
	South Central Oregon	NA	None
	Lower John Day	NA	None
Region 5	Northeast	Ranking system (low/high)	Local match (10% minimum) from applicant
	Southeast	NA	None