

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY

BEST PRACTICES WORKSHOP – DAY 1 SUMMARY

Date: Monday, March 28, 2022, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Location: Zoom

Purpose: Learn about how other DOTs and planning organizations collaboratively vet, prioritize, and fund transportation investments and consider how we might adapt elements from other state processes to improve the processes of WSDOT and RTPOs/MPOs.

Guests: Yahaira Garxirena (CMRPC), Derek Krevat (MassDOT), Sujatha Krishnan (CMRPC), Steve Wilcox (NYSDOT)

RTPO/MPO Attendees: Alan Adolf (YVCOG), Bill Fashing (Southwest RTPO), Lois Bollenback (SRTC), Marc Daily (TRPC), Andy Gomez (Walla Walla Valley), Kelly McGourty (PSRC), Kevin Murphy (SCOG), Matt Ransom (RTC), Shaun Darveshi (Palouse), Tim Barrett (Walla Walla Valley)

WSDOT Staff: Joseph Coppo, Mike Cotten, Dave Bierschbach, Marshall Elizer, Mike Gribner, Cliff Hall, Karena Houser, Jeremy Jewkes, Gabe Philips, Anna Ragaza-Bourassa, Steve Roark, Amy Scarton, Todd Trepanier, Kerri Woehler

Consultant team: Adrienne DeDona, Nicole Metildi, Camille Pearce (JLA)

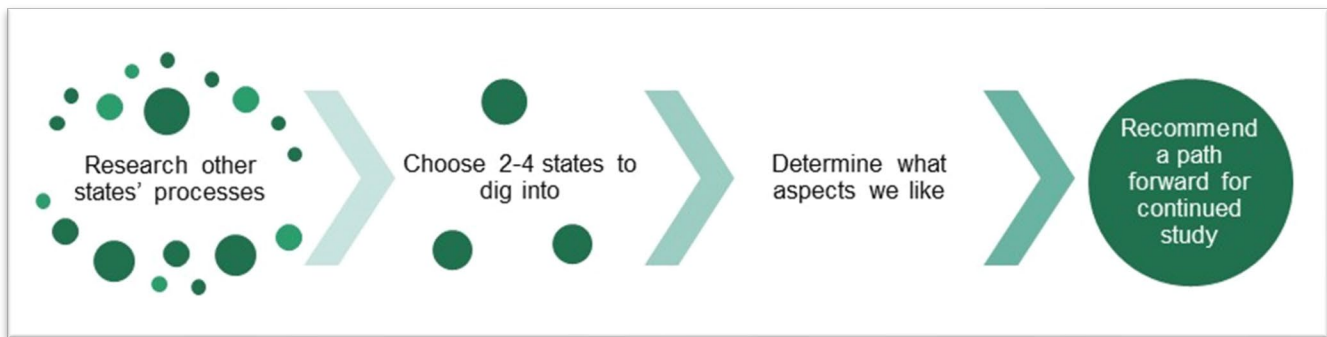
INTRODUCTIONS

Amy Scarton (WSDOT) opened the meeting by reviewing the vision and priorities of the Investment Strategy Committee.

Investment Strategy Vision: WSDOT, the MPOs and RTPOs will collaboratively identify, vet and prioritize transportation investments regionally and statewide. We'll bring the legislature the information it needs to make funding decisions that maximize benefits for the overall system.

Adrienne DeDona (JLA) reviewed the meeting protocols, objectives, and agenda. She shared a list of questions for participants to think about during the presentations, which will serve as a basis for the second day's discussion. The following statement and infographic were also shared as a reminder of Strategy C's purpose and process.

Strategy C: A subgroup of RTPOs/MPOs and WSDOT will identify and pilot several models for how RTPOs/MPOs and WSDOT can collaboratively vet and prioritize projects supported by all participating agencies.



NEW YORK

Steve Wilcox, Asset Management Lead for NYSDOT, gave an overview of New York's enterprise asset management program, which was established in 2011. Their main concerns are prioritizing preservation first, maximizing return on investments, and creating a sustainable system (optimizing conditions). **Their capital funding is allocated as follows:**

- 60% - system preservation
- 25% - set asides for statewide competition for major projects
- 10% - regional discretion
- 5% - special use

They use performance metrics criteria and modeling to determine project funding eligibility and viability, and rely on multi-agency project teams and committees to collaborate at the regional level. NYSDOT's Main Office holds the regions accountable but allows them discretion on project decision making.

Discussion

After Steve's presentation, Adrienne invited attendees to ask questions. The following questions were asked and responded to:

- **What did that first year of change look like? And how does it relate to the ongoing discussion on how success is distributed?**
 - A major contributor was that NYSDOT had a strong commissioner who supported the project, along with staff who had significant experience. There was also regional support for the plan. The pushback came from the municipalities who tend to rely on federal money. However, they have learned to be more flexible with smaller municipalities, which have limited financial resources. The main goal is to make sure assets are being maintained to get the most life out of them.
- **Can you look back to 2011 and discuss some of the challenges in implementing this process and how they were overcome? In particular, the move away from politicization?**
 - The team was given flexibility and folks understood the system needed to be repaired. They understood the austere conditions they were facing, including the lack of funding. Therefore, the asset management team set out to create achievable goals that agencies supported.
- **How do you coordinate between teams to address, coordinate, and combine overlapping projects (or those that are more efficient to combine)?**

- Steve admitted they were not the best at working with overlapping projects that cross regional boundaries. However, the process includes heavy collaborative efforts and efficient communication. The regional teams include state leaders and subject matter experts. The Comprehensive Program Team is made of chairs from the statewide teams, asset management, and executives. The executives pass information along to the Capital Program Delivery Committee so that regional information is funneled upwards.
- **Who is included on the regional teams and who makes the decisions?**
 - The regional teams include a mix of subject matter experts, regional representatives, engineers, and others.
- **Regarding model development and performance metrics, how do those account for smaller communities and the ranking of projects?**
 - Models don't differentiate between state and local roads. For example, pavement projects are decided on a dollar per VMT (Vehicles Mile Traveled) basis.
- **How do your counties and municipalities get revenue? Are there other funding areas? How do you work with the municipalities?**
 - There are some state funds that are dedicated to municipalities and each MPO relationship is different. The asset management team doesn't have a model for working with MPOs but they have been largely supportive of the process. Steve offered to connect this group with someone who can better answer this question.

Adrienne closed the discussion and thanked Steve for sharing his experience and knowledge; then, she introduced the next presenters from Massachusetts.

MASSACHUSETTS

Derek Krevat, Manager of Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Activities at MassDOT, began the presentation for Massachusetts. MassDOT was created in 2019 out of various disparate agencies. They produce an **annual Capital Investment Plan (CIP) with the three program categories: reliability, modernization, and expansion.**

They use a **scoring system to evaluate capital projects** based on multiple criteria; **project readiness** is also a major component in project selection. **Geographic equity is not part of the scoring criteria but is informally factored into decisions.** They are currently updating their Long-Range Transportation Plan to include a more performance-based system and improve their public outreach efforts.

Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Director at Central Mass Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), continued the presentation with an overview of how regional agencies work in Massachusetts. There are **thirteen regional planning agencies** in Massachusetts, of which CMRPC is one. CMRPC is comprised of a variety of community types – rural, suburban, and urban. Their planning process is led by the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO), which is comprised of ten representatives from both state and local agencies, including CMRPC. The CMMPO Advisory Committee and the CMRPC Transportation Committee provide recommendations to the CMMPO as well as review and provide guidance on regional funding allocations, studies, performance metrics, and geographic equity.

MassDOT matches project funding at 20%, and the community is financially responsible for the project's design cost and ROW. The CMRPC also provides support to communities by providing guidance for the competitive state-funded grants.

Yahaira Graxirena, Project Manager at CMRPC's Transportation Division, presented information on the region's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). **Public involvement is a key process in identifying investments in the LRTP**, which is evaluated by the CMRPC. They work with key stakeholders to develop the priority list and have seen a shift towards healthy modes of transportation and transit. Climate change and resiliency have also been identified as a priority for the first time. Projects undergo **performance evaluation on the following criteria: safety, state of good repair, and congestion**. The regions also have their own performance metrics.

To develop the annual project list (TIP), projects are scored based on these performance metrics; then, CMRPC's Transportation Committee and the CMMPO Advisory Committee rank the projects and provide a recommendation to the CMMPO. To support their efforts to be geographically equitable, they are currently analyzing their process and considering current research.

Discussion

Adrienne opened the meeting for discussion and the following questions were asked and responded to:

- **The state DOT covers a 20% match and the local agencies are responsible for the design and Right-of-Way costs. What was the impetus for this? How is that process going?**
 - o This process is for federally funded projects and not smaller capital projects (e.g., bike rack purchases). Municipalities are not direct recipients of federal aid, and MassDOT assumes the role of project manager and assigns teams to programs and projects. This effort is to address the lack of resources at the regional level.
 - o The decision was made due to the number of municipalities. Instead of larger regional projects, municipalities are competing for the same funding.
- **Can you discuss geographic equity more? Curious to understand how that works as compared to state of good repair for example.**
 - o Geographic equity is a piece of the scoring criteria at the discretion of each program manager. Although it is not a formal process, geographic equity is valued and prioritized.
 - o Additionally, they complete a CIP equity analysis annually. The committees are also asked to consider capital investments over the last ten years. If a project hasn't been funded in that time, it will be considered even if it doesn't score high in their metrics.
- **Who has discretion over funding?**
 - o MPOs have discretion over funding allocations. The advisory committees are educated on planning priorities and strive to pick the right mix of projects. The most recent LRTP also provides guidance on the project approach.
 - o Evaluating how funds are allocated over the last four years is a major part of this process and allow them to determine if they are meeting the community's needs.
 - o They recently saw a shift in priorities at the RTP level for public transit and pedestrian services. Therefore, they are working with communities to implement these priority shifts in order to provide opportunities for the local agencies to use funds through the TIP for these priorities.

Derek shared the following link to the most recent CIP in the chat. Page 35 has more information on geographic equity. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2021-capital-investment-program-cip-pdf/download>

NEXT STEPS

Adrienne closed the discussion and thanked the Massachusetts representatives for their time. Derek offered to connect afterwards for any follow up discussions. Adrienne then reviewed the agenda for the second day of the workshop. After the workshop, the Strategy C working group will reconvene and help inform next steps and recommendations.

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY



NATIONAL BEST PRACTICES WORKSHOP – DAY 2 SUMMARY

Date: Tuesday, March 29, 2022, 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.

Location: Virtual meeting over Zoom

Guests: Alison Stettner, Mark Reichert (FDOT)

RTPO/MPO Attendees: Alan Adolf (YVCOG), Bill Fashing (INFO), Lois Bollenback (SRTC), Kelly McGourty (PSRC), Shaun Darveshi (Palouse), Tim Barrett (Walla Walla Valley)

WSDOT Staff: Joseph Coppo, Mike Cotten, Carley Francis, Mike Gribner, Cliff Hall, Karena Houser, Jeremy Jewkes, Gabe Philips, Anna Ragaza-Bourassa, Steve Roark, Todd Trepanier

Consultant team: Adrienne DeDona, Nicole Metildi, Camille Pearce (JLA)

Purpose: Learn about how other DOTs and planning organizations collaboratively vet, prioritize, and fund transportation investments and consider how we might adapt elements from other state processes to improve the processes of WSDOT and RTPOs/MPOs.

INTRODUCTIONS

Adrienne began the meeting by reviewing the workshop objective, the investment strategy vision, meeting protocols and the agenda. She also reminded the group of the questions to think about while listening to the presentations, which the group will discuss in small groups.

She then reviewed the most recent funding opportunities available to WSDOT and RTPOs/MPOs. The state legislature approved \$450,000 for WSDOT to complete a performance-based project evaluation model. MPOs greater than 200,000 or State DOTs also have access to the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law grant funding. Applicants can receive up to \$2 million for prioritization process pilots.

FLORIDA

Alison Stettner, Director of the Office of Policy Planning, and Mark Reichert, Administrator for Metropolitan Planning in the Office of Policy Planning, gave a presentation on Florida DOT's transportation investment prioritization process.

Florida has a **bottom-up process influenced by the 27 MPOs** who are diverse in culture, size, and needs. The Florida Metro Planning Partnership (FMPP) includes staff from the central office, representatives from the seven districts, staff from MPOs, and other stakeholders. The FMPP discusses current issues agencies are facing.

The **5-year work program process** is as follows:

1. MPOs conduct their prioritization process.
2. MPO priorities funnel up to the district office and become part of the district work program.
3. This information is communicated to the state offices, who evaluate the projects for readiness, planning consistency, and other criteria.
4. Once projects are evaluated, FDOT will fund the projects according to the priority list until they have allocated all the funds for that region.

The goal of the 5-year work program is to **fund as many local top priorities as possible. The legislature is rarely involved in the individual projects** due to the robust nature of this system. However, they do set some funding parameters. Set asides are allocated from the state funding off the top and include certain buckets for 25 different categories designated by the legislature. They also designate at least 20% of state funds for public transportation projects.

Projects are typically grassroots efforts developed by the MPOs, and the state department offers guidance on strategic funding to get the most benefit for the least amount of money. They also coordinate with regional coalitions to develop a regional lens. Preservation and safety are the main priorities at the state level along with debt service. Expansion is the fourth priority on the list.

Discussion

After the brief overview, the following questions were asked and responded to:

- **Can you talk about the annual prioritization that MPOs go through and how that rolls up to decision making at the state level and the update of TIPs?**
 - o This process is overlapping in nature and so is continually being worked. In the Spring, MPOs do a call for projects and re-evaluate their priority lists to create a new one. In the Fall, FDOT cycles through their work program development process based on MPO project lists. They evaluate the projects and balance any cost increases or scope to reflect the current state of affairs, then send out the work program for public hearings and public engagement efforts.
 - o Public input is incorporated into the work plan, which then heads to the legislature for approval. The legislature focuses on the process and budget rather than on individual projects. Once the legislature adopts the work program, FDOT develops a TIP which is then approved by the MPOs and rolled into the STIP.
- **What is the annual budget figure?**
 - o FDOT approved a \$12.7 billion budget this year – the largest it has ever been. They have another \$5 million in revenue for earmarked projects.
 - o Most projects are state funded. The expressway has separate funding.
- **How do FDOT projects fit into the funding process?**
 - o Their statewide process is collaborative in nature and includes consistent discussions between DOT and MPOs. Together, they inform the work program.
 - o They have a strategic modal system for the interstate and key ports, and these investment decisions are based on traffic analysis. The interstate projects include a collaborative process between FDOT and the local agencies who try to align priorities. State highways that are not part of the strategic modal system are planned at the local level.

- FDOT has liaisons that work directly with MPOs, and they share statewide data to support streamlined procedures. They offer their resources online, including the MPO program management handbook that outlines the entire process and a document that provides guidance on moving programs/projects from conception to implementation.
- The following resources were shared by FDOT in the chat:
 - Partnering with FDOT: A Resource Guide for Local Governments https://fdotwww.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/planning/policy/local-resource-guide_v21.pdf?sfvrsn=e72abc3_12
 - The FDOT Five-Year Work Program <https://www.fdot.gov/topics/fdot-work-program/wp-public-hearings>
- Since they have a continual process, it allows DOT to adapt projects in real time to current issues as well as clarify scope, link projects with the right funding sources, and get projects ready for implementation.
- **What if a local agency wants a project done on a state route? More specifically, if the project is not a priority for DOT but is for city, what would that look like? How does that move forward to being funding?**
 - If the project is not on the DOT plan, it has to move through the MPO process. The main priority is that the project must show fiscal constraint and have funding. DOT is not responsible for making those decisions – their only concern is if the project is safe or not.
- **Where does stewardship reside in the system? Is that true on interstate or NHS?**
 - Projects must meet federal requirements. They also have strict access request requirements and require detailed analysis of the proposed changes. The project must make the interchange safer.
 - DOT has stewardship on all systems since the MPOs do not accept funds.
 - The process is very collaborative and community centric; FDOT works together with MPOs and tries to strike a balance between community priorities and what they have to deliver.
 - The following resource was shared: Florida's Strategic Intermodal System <https://www.fdot.gov/planning/sis/default.shtm>
- **Can you talk more about the prioritization process being equitable? How does it not lean towards population size or political influence?**
 - DOT tries to spread projects fairly across the state; however, the process is more strategically focused. They aim to make the public engagement process inclusive so that low income and minority populations also have a voice. The department has robust public engagement policies that include additional efforts in rural communities not covered by MPOs.
 - Florida has a high population of disabled community members as well as diversity in languages spoken and cultures. They target outreach to non-governmental agencies to include voices from diverse populations. MPOs are also required to report on their engagement efforts and inform DOT of local issues.
 - Over a 5-year period, the MPOs evaluate their funding based on fair share formulas to make sure funding is equally dispersed.
- **Can you explain the state's freight program?**
 - MPOAC developed a committee which calls for projects. Each MPO can submit up to three freight projects. The committee then creates the list and sends to DOT for guidance.

- The state relies on the MPOAC to foster regionalism, evaluate tradeoffs, and ensure needs are being met. All the plans are interrelated from local to state level and integrated in the state-developed planning documents.

Adrienne thanked Mark and Alison for sharing their experience in Florida. Alison and Mark invited the committee to reach out if they had any additional questions.

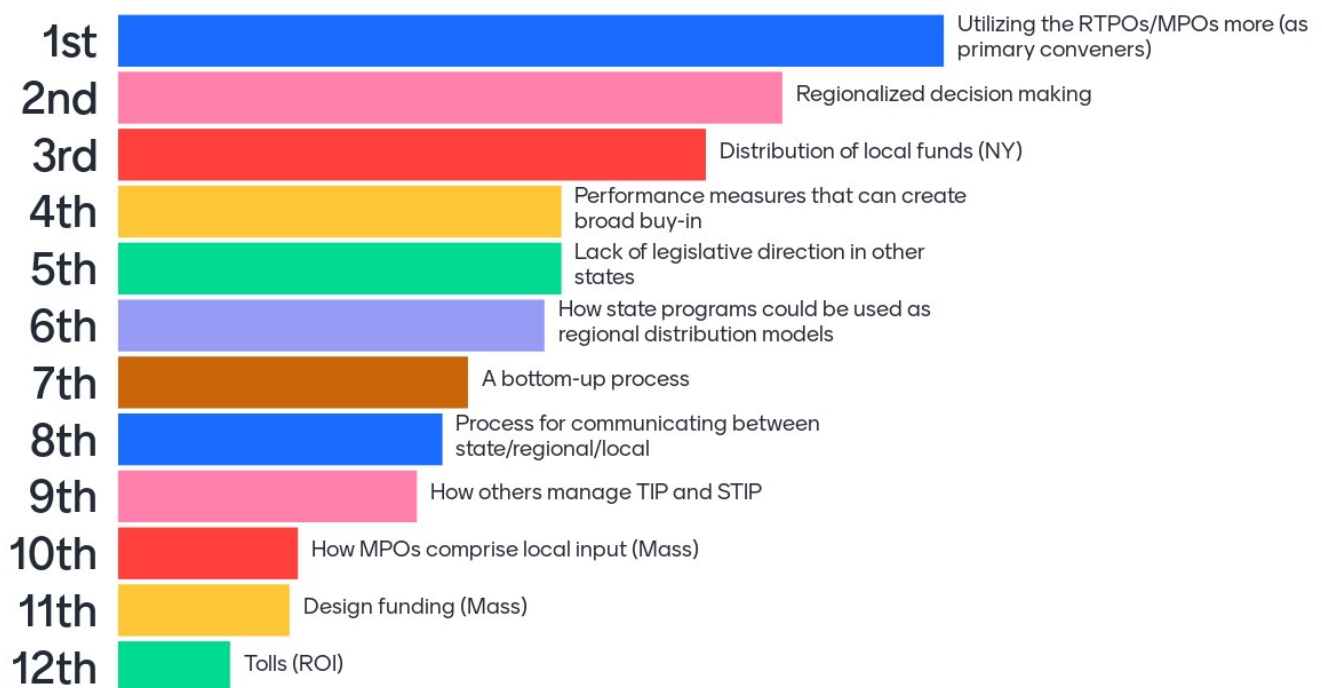
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

The participants were split into four breakout groups to discuss the following questions..

- *What was most compelling or surprising to you?*
- *Are there specific aspects of each state's process that are particularly interesting? How might we adapt them here in Washington?*
- *What did you learn that will be of use to you in the future?*
- *Are there ongoing opportunities or programs we can connect with or leverage?*

The group was then polled on the following question: **What are you most interested in exploring further?**

The group said their **top priority was to utilize the RTPOs/MPOs more, as a primary convener.**



NEXT STEPS

Adrienne closed out the meeting and reviewed next steps. Strategy A, B, and C subgroups will reconvene to discuss how to proceed sometime between now and May. Then, the entire Investment Strategy Committee will also meet in May.