

2022-2027 Transportation Improvement Program Bridge Evaluation and Programming Options

Introduction

Bridge condition in the Capital Region has been of concern to CDTC, NYSDOT and local governments for many years. As CDTC approaches the update of its Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for federal fiscal years 2022-2027, ensuring bridges are being adequately considered in the programming process is of utmost concern to NYSDOT. The following provides New Visions 2050 recommendations related to bridge infrastructure and options for CDTC Planning Committee consideration regarding the evaluation and programming of bridges in the 2022-2027 TIP.

New Visions 2050 Recommended Strategies:

To meet regional and statewide goals for bridge infrastructure, New Visions 2050 recommended the following strategies:

- Devote significant TIP resources to infrastructure preservation and renewal, including continued local and State investment in routine maintenance.
- Support less costly and shorter-lasting bridge repairs for the foreseeable future. This maximizes the investments in bridges in the short term.
- Evaluate TIP projects according to CDTC identified merit categories. Criteria identified in the appropriate infrastructure merit category prioritize projects that propose preservation and renewal of existing infrastructure.
- Encourage the use of alternative funding approaches, especially local funding mechanisms and small-scale public-private financing opportunities.
- Encourage technology innovation within New York State.
- Support the integration of complete street features in preservation and renewal treatments wherever possible and heavily consider community context regardless of facility ownership.

These strategies provide a foundation for programming bridge projects in CDTC TIP.

NYSDOT Concerns Regarding Bridge Scores

NYSDOT has approached CDTC staff regarding bridge projects and the lower numeric scores they have received in the TIP project evaluation process, implying that they are not as important as road or other project types. For context, CDTC's scoring rubric is a tool to provide the Policy Board, Planning Committee and the public with information on the relative value of a project, expressed as a total project score that combines a benefit/cost ratio with a merit score. Total project scores are organized by project type (i.e. road preservation, bridge preservation, bicycle, pedestrian, etc.) in order to compare project scores by category rather than compare bridge scores to pavement scores.

Options for Planning Committee Consideration

With that framework in mind, there are several ways to address the concern of NYSDOT with respect to the TIP update process and bridges. CDTC met with NYSDOT to discuss options and offer the following for Planning Committee consideration.

Option 1: Revise the merit score sheet to allow bridges to score more points by: 1) revising the evaluation criteria in the Preservation/Renewal of Existing Infrastructure Category and 2) revising the evaluation criteria and increasing the maximum point value of the Security and Resiliency to Natural Hazards and Human Caused Events category. (See Merit Score Sheet)

Option 2: Keep the original language in Merit Score sheet and utilize the New Visions 2050 financial plan to develop project programming guidance by project types. In short, assign a percentage of the available funding aligned with the New Visions 2050 budget to guide the programming process.

Option 3: Add a weighted score to all bridge projects at the completion of CDTC's evaluation to inflate the scores of bridges.

Other options may be developed by CDTC's Planning Committee.