

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairman Martin E. Nohe and Members
Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

FROM: Monica Backmon, Executive Director

DATE: October 6, 2017

SUBJECT: Approval of Comments on VTrans Draft Recommendations on the Tier 1 Needs

- 1. Purpose.** To seek Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) approval of the comments on the draft recommendations on the Tier 1 needs for the VTrans Multimodal Transportation Plan (VMTP 2025) update.
- 2. Suggested Motion:** *I move approval of the draft recommendations on the Tier 1 needs for the VTrans plan update to the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment and authorization for the Executive Director to submit comments to the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment.*
- 3. Background.** The Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) is leading the effort to develop and implement the Statewide Transportation Needs Assessment process as part of the VTrans Multimodal Transportation Plan 2025 (VMTP). The VMTP2025, along with the VTrans Vision Plan, make up the overall statewide Transportation Plan, VTrans2040. One of the key purposes of the Needs Assessment is to serve as a screen for projects applying for consideration under the Smart Scale prioritization process. All projects submitted for the Smart Scale process must pass through an initial screening process. This initial screening process is a critical component because it links the planning and programming processes to ensure the overarching transportation goals of the Commonwealth are advanced. If a project does not meet the capacity and operations needs or the safety needs under the Transportation Needs Assessment of VTrans2040, it cannot move forward in the Smart Scale process. The Transportation Needs Assessment will assess the State's transportation needs at three scales, and will include a statewide assessment of safety needs:
 - Corridor of Statewide Significance (COSS) - Interregional travel market
 - Regional Networks - Intraregional travel market
 - Urban Development Areas (UDA) Local activity center market

For projects to advance under the district grant program, they must meet a need on:

- A Corridor of Statewide Significance
- A Regional Network
- An Urban Development Area
- A Statewide Safety Need

For projects to advance under the high priority projects program, they must meet a need on:

- A Corridor of Statewide Significance
- A Regional Network

On Thursday, January 26, 2017, the VTrans consultant team presented VMTP2025 draft recommendations and the draft tier one combined summary, to the Regional Jurisdiction and Agency Coordinating Committee (RJACC). The presentation was followed by an Open House held at the NVTA offices.

The Executive Director submitted comments that were developed in coordination with the RJACC, on behalf of NVTA in February 2017.

Since these comments were submitted, the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment have been working on the transition from needs to development of the 2025 Recommendations, and to effectively communicate needs and recommendations to stakeholders and the public, the OIPI team developed consolidated needs to synthesize and **tier the needs**.

Tiering Results

The process resulted in 170 total consolidated needs statewide. The combined result of the needs criticality, VTrans goals, and local perspective input, along with additional coordination with the CTB, VDOT, and DRPT staff, resulted in a refined list of consolidated needs and a consensus on the tiering of needs.

The next step of the VMTP will focus on recommendations for future transportation investments. The recommendations will include a broad range of project types and needs, including those eligible for SMART Scale and other funding sources, and will include recommendations for safety, maintenance, and capacity enhancement projects.

In effect, the 2025 Recommendations component of the VMTP will represent one source for a potential pipeline of future six-year improvement program (SYIP) projects and planning. This is a new concept for VTrans. The primary purpose is to create a more distinct connection between VTrans and the programming decisions made annually to develop and implement the

SYIP. This is achieved in this step through highlighting the most critical projects, programs, and studies necessary in the next 10 years to address needs consistent with the VTrans vision, guiding principles, and goals. ***Note that the outcomes of this new approach will not change the existing SMART Scale or other funding program eligibility or screening requirements.***

For Tier I needs, existing projects will be documented through coordination with District Planners, DRPT, MPOs, and local staff. The existing projects will be identified from SYIP and MPO TIP/LRTP documents, looking for “best-fit” projects for all needs. For all unfunded pipeline projects and new project ideas, profile sheets will be developed that document the need, the project (or general recommendation), how the project addresses VTrans goals and the actual need, a summary of potential funding sources, and a planning level cost estimate.

The 2025 Recommendations are developed by focusing on consistency with two of VTrans2040 Guiding Principles – (1) Optimize Return on Investment, and (2) Consider Operational Improvements and Demand Management First. To accomplish this, the process for developing 2025 Recommendations acknowledged real funding limitations and anticipated resources within the next decade, and took a careful view of environmental, political, regulatory, fiscal, or engineering constraints associated with every potential recommendation. ***Tier I recommendations will help determine potential future SMART Scale and other funding applications, or to identify funding needs for further planning or preliminary engineering.***

Recommended Staff Comments

- As the initial comments were submitted in February, staff would like an opportunity to review a redlined copy of the proposed changes that have been made to the draft VTrans Plan since the initial comment letter was submitted.
- Staff would like clarity on the nexus of the VTrans 2040 Plan and SmartScale funding opportunities. Previously staff was informed that being in VTrans was not a requirement for SmartScale and other State funding. However, per the VTrans project website, “Tier I recommendations will help determine potential future SMART Scale and other funding applications, or to identify funding needs for further planning or preliminary engineering.”
 - Does this statement imply that being in Tier 1 of VTrans increases the likelihood of SmartScale funding?
 - How were the proposed projects identified for Tier 1 inclusion, selected?
 - Will there be additional opportunities to revisit the projects that are selected for Tier1?
 - Is there concurrence of the Tier 1 needs with the localities and regions in which the proposed Tier 1 project is located?

- What level of follow-up was conducted aside from the two meetings OIPI held with stakeholders earlier this year? Did OIPI or their consultants follow up with each locality or regional agency for concurrence?
- Answers to the questions should be provided in a format that is easily shared and made available on the web.

Comments are due by October 17, 2017.