

Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council

RTIP POLICIES

The Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) is a list of highway, roadway, pathway, public transit and other transportation projects that have been “programmed” (approved) to receive and expend federal funds over the next consecutive four-year period. The Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council (CDTC) is the federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization with responsibility for programming federal transportation funds within Chelan County and Douglas County. RTIP projects programmed by CDTC are authorized (or denied) on the basis of the following determinations:

1. Consistency with Regional Transportation Plan

Projects receiving federal funds are consistent with the transportation goals, objectives, policies, strategies and investment priorities in CDTC’s adopted Regional Transportation Plan.

2. Fiscal Constraint

The RTIP must be fiscally constrained, meaning that projects can only be programmed by CDTC if complete funding for a project is reasonably expected to be available.

3. Transportation Equity

Projects receiving federal funds do not discriminate against low-income, minority, disabled, elderly and other traditionally underserved populations by creating disproportionate negative impacts or excluding underserved populations from benefits.

CDTC evaluates RTIP projects individually and as a complete program of regionwide expenditure of federal transportation funds to ensure conformity with above three requirements. A programming approval, with adoption of the annual RTIP or periodic amendment to the RTIP, represents a certification by CDTC to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration that these requirements are upheld.

Once projects are programmed in the RTIP they are reviewed by the Washington State Department of Transportation and added to the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Final approval of the STIP by FHWA or FTA “obligates” federal funds to RTIP projects, at which point the funds become available to the implementing agency for reimbursement.

RTIP PROJECT SELECTION PROCEDURES

While all projects must be approved through CDTC’s programming process before they are eligible to obligate federal funds, the responsibility for initial selection of projects for the RTIP is shared between CDTC, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and in certain cases directly by federal agencies.

▪ **Projects Selected by CDTC**

CDTC administers project selection for two federal funding programs: The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) and Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program (TA Set-Aside). Projects are selected through a competitive solicitation and prioritization process open to all eligible recipients in the region. Proposed projects undergo staff review for eligibility under federal requirements, and a peer review by the CDTC Technical Advisory Committee for completeness and deliverability risk. Project applications are then reviewed and ranked by the CDTC governing board. Based on the amount of STBG and TA funding available, the rank-order

prioritization of projects is used to determine which projects can be approved and programmed in the RTIP.

▪ **Projects Selected by State or Federal Agencies**

Most RTIP projects approved by CDTC are initially selected by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) or the US Department of Transportation (USDOT). CDTC's authority and responsibility for programming projects selected by state and federal agencies is best understood as a final approval (or denial) based on the certification requirements outlined in the introduction of this document. Projects receive funding through state- and federally-managed programs at any time of the year and are subsequently programmed by CDTC as amendments to the RTIP.

PARTIALLY FUNDED & UNFUNDED RTIP PROJECTS

Federal law allows what are referred to as "illustrative projects" to be included in the RTIP, in order to identify additional projects that do not yet meet the fiscal constraint requirement but are actively competing for state and federal funds. CDTC pre-approves these projects for amendment into the RTIP by identifying projects and anticipated federal funding amounts in a separate list of "Partially Funded and Unfunded Projects." This list of pre-approved projects is included in the RTIP in order to demonstrate CDTC's endorsement of regionally-significant projects to other granting agencies, and to expedite the amendment of projects into the RTIP and STIP once full funding is secured. These Projects have been deemed by CDTC to satisfy the federal certification requirements for equity and plan consistency, but await certification of fiscal constraint.

RTIP AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the RTIP are necessary in order to add or delete projects or change the amount of project funding. There are two types of amendments: administrative and formal. Authority to approve administrative amendments is delegated CDTC staff; formal amendments are approved by the CDTC governing board.

Administrative amendments occur for all projects, regardless of funding source and agency selection, in the following circumstances:

- Modifying the schedule of projects and funding expenditures within the four-year period of the RTIP
- Modifying the balance of expenditures between project phases (engineering, right-of-way and construction) without changing the total amount of project funding

Administrative amendments also occur for projects selected by state or federal agencies in the following circumstances:

- Maintenance or Preservation projects: adding or removing projects, or modifying the amount of funds
- Safety projects: adding or removing projects, or modifying the amount of funds (applies to projects funded through the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS), or any projects solely addressing rock slope protection, safety-related signage, guardrail or rumble strips)
- Modifying the total amount of project funds by less than 30 percent of total project cost, but not to exceed an increase or decrease of \$1,000,000
- Modifying a project's scope, environmental status or location
- Correcting a project's federal funding source

- Transferring a project from the Partially Funded and Unfunded RTIP Projects list to the “Funded Program of Projects” list, upon confirmation of selection by appropriate state or federal agency

All other amendments that do not meet one of the criteria above are required to be formally approved by the CDTC board.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

CDTC provides for multiple layers of public outreach in the development of the RTIP. Many RTIP projects are initially identified in a city or county Six Year Transportation Improvement Program or in Link Transit’s annual Transit Development Plan, both of which are adopted following local public outreach and comment periods. Each year CDTC advertises the availability of the draft RTIP for review and comment in accordance with CDTC’s Public Participation Plan, holds at least one public open house prior to adoption, makes the draft RTIP available for review on the CDTC website, and makes the draft document available in alternative language formats by request.

In addition to the annual RTIP development, the policies in this document related to RTIP amendments were approved by CDTC following public comment opportunities. These policies provide a standing, automatic approval for certain safety, maintenance and preservation expenditures. Those projects, when added to the RTIP through the administrative amendment process, are therefore programmed by CDTC without further public outreach. All other projects added to the RTIP through the amendment process are programmed following a 10-day public comment period in accordance with CDTC’s Public Participation Plan. The RTIP includes a schedule of monthly cutoff dates for accepting RTIP amendment requests that account for the required public comment period.

PROJECT PHASING & COMPLETION

Federal statutes require that CDTC only program federal funding in the RTIP for projects that can be completed with demonstrated commitments of full project funding from all sources. Funding for RTIP projects is typically programmed in some combination of the following project phases: planning, preliminary engineering, right-of-way and construction. An individual phase of a project may be programmed in the RTIP to receive federal funding. However, once the project sponsor accepts any amount of federal funds, they assume the responsibility for completion of all current and remaining phases of work and must initiate the next project phase within a ten-year period following the initial obligation of federal funds. A recipient of FHWA funding programs may be required to reimburse FHWA for all prior expenditures of federal funds if the next phase of a project is not initiated within ten years.

As a steward of federal transportation funding within the region, CDTC desires to minimize risk to its member local agencies and to avoid a potential net loss of federal funding for the region. This is addressed by conducting an assessment and peer agency review of all projects submitted to CDTC in competition for federal STBG and/or TA Set-Aside funding, prior to selection and programming in the RTIP.

INACTIVE PROJECTS

For purposes of the STBG and TA Set-Aside competitive program administered by CDTC, the term “Inactive Project” means a project that has not yet initiated a Local Agency Agreement with the Washington State Department of Transportation that allows for work on the project to begin and be eligible for federal reimbursement. Recipients of STBG or TA Set-Aside funding shall have 23-months following the meeting at which the CDTC governing board completes a

ranking and selection process to award these funds. For example, a project selected in August will have until July, two years following the award, to execute a Local Agency Agreement. If for any reason a project is Inactive by this date, CDTC will rescind the prior award and reallocate the funds the following month as part of the next cycle of project awards. An agency will have the opportunity at that time to explain its schedule for quickly achieving “Active” status and to request retaining the funding.

SUPPLEMENTS TO STBG & TA FUNDING

Its common practice for CDTC to award STBG and TA funds every two years to allow for larger program size and project awards. At other times, resulting from increasing federal allocations or cost savings from past projects, CDTC may have extra “unprogrammed” funds. When available and at the CDTC governing board’s discretion, these extra funds may be used to supplement existing RTIP projects in the event of unanticipated project cost increases or project scope modifications. Local agencies may inquire CDTC staff to determine unprogrammed fund availability. Requests for supplemental project funding will be reviewed by the CDTC governing board on a case-by-case basis. Projects awarded supplemental funds will be approved by the CDTC governing board in the form of a formal RTIP amendment.

PROJECT DELAYS

WSDOT must ensure timely statewide delivery of projects in order to protect the state’s annual allocation of federal funds, which must be fully obligated each federal fiscal year or forfeited to another state. For that reason, WSDOT sets annual funding obligation targets for each region of the state. If CDTC member agencies collectively fail to meet the annual obligation target, that year’s unused amount may be reapportioned to another region of the state or to WSDOT. This outcome could represent a net loss of federal funding to the region. CDTC therefore works closely with member agencies to coordinate project delivery schedules and ensure timely delivery of the region’s share of federal transportation funding. If a project becomes inactive or otherwise limited from making progress sufficient to achieve the region’s annual funding obligation target, the CDTC governing board may at any time elect to rescind funds for reallocation to a different project that is ready to proceed.