

**Blair Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Project Selection Process Documentation  
for the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program**

Overview

The Statewide and Metropolitan Transportation Planning Final Rule (Title 23 U.S.C. Section 34 and Title 49 U.S.C. Section 1607) requires that areas with an urban population of 50,000 or more prepare plans and programs through a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3 C) planning process to be eligible to receive federal transportation funds. The Blair Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the designated group that conducts the planning process.

During the two year planning process to update the transportation improvement program (TIP), the Blair MPO works with PennDOT, transit providers, the Blair County Planning Commission, elected officials, the public and other stakeholders to identify transportation priorities as candidate projects for the TIP and the long range plan. The MPO follows the Department's financial guidance of available funds when prioritizing projects in the TIP.

The Clean Air Act Amendment (CAAA) of 1990 requires planning activities for air quality nonattainment areas. Although Blair County is an "attainment area" for current air quality standards, transportation conformity analysis on certain projects is required due to its 1997 violation of the 8-hour Ozone Standard and the February 16, 2018, D.C. Circuit decision in South Coast Air Quality Management District v. EPA (case no. 15-1115) and the subsequent guidance issued by EPA (EPA-420-B-18-050).

The Blair County Planning Commission, on behalf of the MPO, invites public comments during a 30 day public comment period on the draft Blair County TIP and related documents by advertising in the newspaper, placing the documents on the Blair Planning website, and holding a public meeting before MPO approval. Additional comments may be received for projects from the State Transportation Commission's 30 day public comment period at the beginning of the statewide TIP update process. After the MPO approves the TIP, the State Transportation Commission adopts and includes the Blair County TIP projects in the statewide TIP.

Project Selection

The transportation planning process supports decision-making and project selection by ensuring that each dollar invested enhances the overall "performance" of the Commonwealth's transportation system. The priority areas are as follows:

- Bridges on the National Highway System (NHS)
- Roadway conditions on the NHS
- Bridges on the remainder of the state and local roadway system
- Roadways on the remainder of the state roadway system.

Since the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act, performance-based planning and programming, Transportation Performance Management, and the Transportation Asset Management Plan requirements have been included in the process. Information from the Asset Management Steering Committee, the Asset Management Division, Bridge Asset Management System (BAMS), and Pavement Asset Management System (PAMS) are included in PennDOT's General and Procedural Guidance

Draft

document prepared for the TIP update to provide enhanced support for project programming to achieve Lowest Life Cycle Cost (LLCC) and high benefit to cost projects.

The Program Center will work with the Asset Management Division to provide the MPO with a list of recommended projects by work type based on LLCC projections derived from PennDOT's pavement and bridge asset management systems. The Financial Guidance document has been updated to include an Asset Management Factor, which allows for adjusted funding in areas that demonstrate greater need. More details can be found in the "Pennsylvania 2019 Transportation Asset Management Plan".

Much of the information considered when selecting the draft TIP candidate projects comes from the following categories:

- Carryover projects (projects included in the current TIP that need further funding)
- Transportation Asset Management Plan and Performance Management, Measures, and Targets for Bridges and Roadways on the National Highway System
- PA Strategic Highway Safety Plan
- Blair MPO Long Range Transportation Plan
- County and municipal priorities from Planning Commission surveys and PennDOT Connects interviews
- Other state and regional plans and studies such as the PA Freight Movement Plan
- Equitable Distribution/Environmental Justice.

After considering the project evaluation criteria from the above, a list of fiscally balanced project priorities is prepared by PennDOT for the draft highway and bridge portion of the TIP. Altoona Metro Transit prepares the draft transit portion of the TIP.

The MPO Technical and Coordinating committees then review and approve the draft TIP and forward it to the PennDOT Program Center for further review.

The planning commission conducts a Core Elements Environmental Justice Analysis of the draft program or plan and sends copies to organizations that represent people in low-income groups and minority groups and to the Nations and Tribes for their review and comment as required.

Blair Planning advertises the draft TIP and the required documents in the newspaper and places the documents on the Blair Planning website for a 30 day public comment period and holds a public meeting before MPO approval.

### Roadway Projects

The department updates its roadway inventories annually in the Roadway Management System (RMS). This information is included in the Roadway "5-Year Plan", where roadway needs are assessed using cycles that follow PennDOT's Pavement Policy Manual. Projects selected from the 5-Year Plan may include factors like Decade of Investment (DOI) plan projects; fulfillment of and maintaining acceptable levels on the scorecard of influence; hierarchy of the roadway; current roadway conditions; and the next needed pavement treatment cycle.

## Bridge Projects

The physical condition of a bridge's superstructure is compared to its original as-built condition. A number is assigned by state-certified bridge inspectors during each inspection of the bridge, which occurs at least every two years on bridges 20 feet or > in length. Bridge condition ratings range from nine to zero. A rating of four (4) or below indicates poor conditions that result in a "Poor" classification.

### A. Replacements:

1. Bridges with condition five or less are evaluated
2. Prioritization by Business Plan Network: Interstate top priority and non-NHS with less than 2,000 ADT lowest priority
3. Consider roadway projects for combination with bridge replacements
4. Evaluate if Department Forces can complete the work.

### B. Rehabilitations:

Same logic as Replacements, but mostly look for bridges that we can raise the condition ratings to a six (6) or greater for all three major bridge components (substructures, superstructures and deck).

### C. Preservation:

1. Rely on evaluations and where appropriate cycles for each preservation treatment:
  - a. 10 to 20-year cycle for deck overlays (depends on type of overlay and traffic volumes)
  - b. 10-year replacement cycle for expansion dam strip seal glands
  - c. 15-year replacement cycle for tooth dam expansion troughs
  - d. 50 to 75-year cycle to replace entire expansion dams
  - e. 30 to 40-year cycle for painting steel girder bridges
  - f. 15 to 20-year cycle for painting steel trusses and steel through plate girders.
2. If appropriate, the deck and joint preservations are included with roadway projects on Business Plan Networks 1 to 3.
3. Standalone group bridge preservation projects are established for:
  - a. Painting projects
  - b. To get bridges on cycle when no roadway projects are planned
  - c. To address Business Plan Network 4 when Department Forces cannot complete the work
  - d. Scour or substructure repairs.
4. Prioritize by Business Plan Network and by the highest cost assets (major river crossings).

The TIP and long range plan may also include funds for projects that received funding from programs allocated on a statewide basis, including the following:

- Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside
- Appalachian Regional Commission Local Access Road Program
- Automated Red Light Enforcement and Green Light-Go Programs
- Multimodal Transportation Fund
- Congested Corridor Improvement Program
- Rapid Bridge Replacement Program (P3)
- Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Program (RRX)
- Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Statewide Set-aside.

In addition to the above process, please refer to the *“Pennsylvania Transportation Performance Management Performance-based Planning and Programming Procedures”* that describes the cooperative efforts between the planning partners, the Federal Highway Administration, and PennDOT to address those required procedures. PennDOT District 9-0 also has a *“2025 TIP Development Timeline”* of its activities.