

PUERTO RICO HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

PROJECT EVALUATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA PROCESS

Approved by the Puerto Rico

Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee

June 24, 2015



Introduction

This document describes the process for evaluating petitions for funding and the prioritizing of projects for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The Puerto Rico Metropolitan Planning Organization (PRMPO) and the Puerto Rico Highway and Transportation Authority (PRHTA) designed this process to assist in the development of a fiscally-constrained TIP/STIP.

The STIP is the document that includes all capital, maintenance and operational transportation and highway projects that receive federal funding from rural, statewide and urbanized areas, which includes the TIPs developed and approved by the PRMPO. However, before any project can be programmed in the STIP, the PRMPO engaged in extensive public involvement activities, as to inform the general public, local governments, transit providers, and other stakeholder of the federal funds that Puerto Rico receives from the U.S. Department of Transportation through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Most of the funds received through these federal agencies are administer by PRHTA. The public meetings coordinated by PRMPO and PRHTA are carried through all the territory, in strategically selected locations, that could best serve the regions. In addition, to informed the public of the different FTA and FHWA programs and their requirements, the PRMPO makes a called for projects with at least a seven month anticipation prior to the development of the TIP. The formal solicitation forms are handling in the meetings; in addition to have they post it in the PRHTA website. In the past, the called for project was made every year, but in the most recent revisions to the MPO Rules and Operation Procedure, this was changed as to solicit new projects or petitions for funds every two years.

The last review conducted by FHWA and FTA to the PRHTA STIP development process, and the eventual need to be more effective in the allocation of the funds, has bound us to document our project evaluation and selection process. PRHTA and the PRMPO has identified the various elements that are included into consideration at the time to evaluate a petition for fund and what is the process that it is implement to decide which petitions are selected and programmed, and which petitions are not included.

The process encompasses four basic steps:

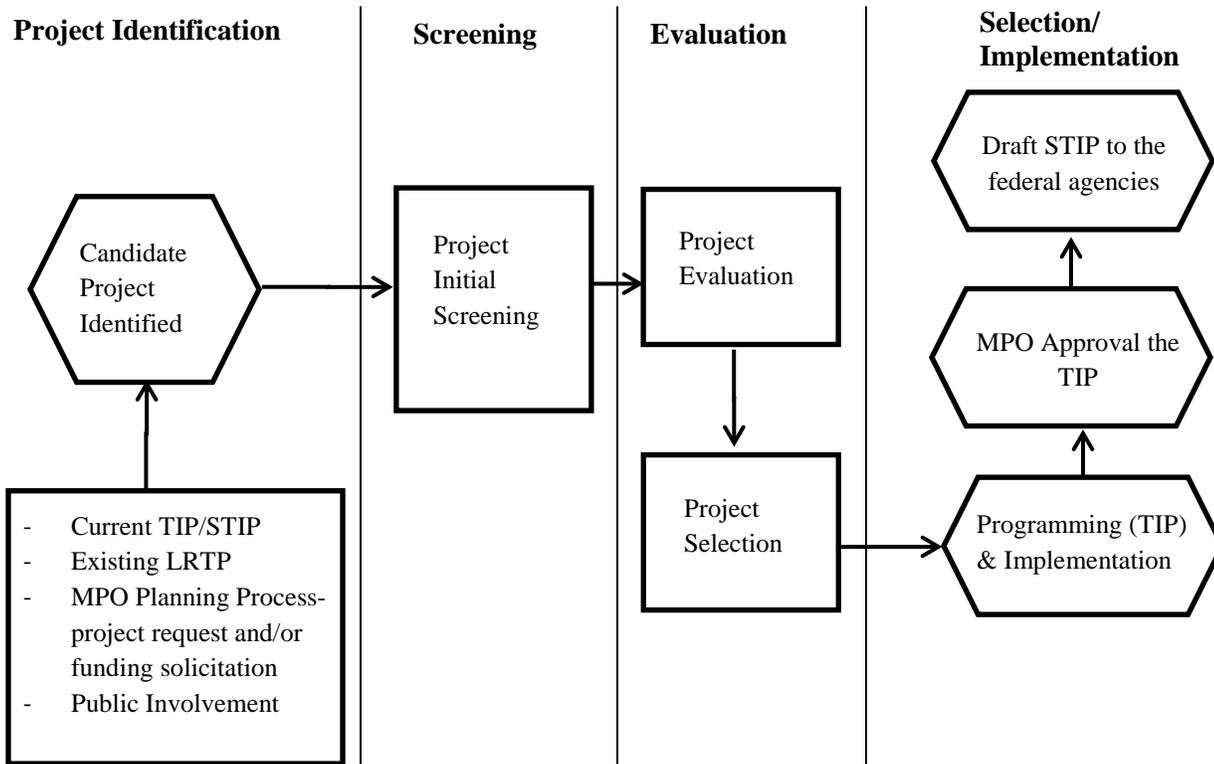
1. Project Identification and Solicitation
2. Project Screening
3. Project Evaluation
4. Project Selection and Programming

In general, the process herein describe was develop taking into consideration the following guiding principles:

- The evaluation of projects should be linked to the adopted goals of the PRLRTP as well as required MAP-21 planning factors.
- Each project should be evaluated based on its contribution to achieve the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements.
- The criteria used to evaluate projects should include a mix of quantitative and qualitative criteria.
- The input of the PRMPO Policy Board Committee members, which are representative of the urbanized areas stakeholders, should be appropriately integrated into the development of the prioritization criteria and process.

Each step is dependent on inputs from the prior step; the process therefore works in a logical, “building-block” manner.

Exhibit 1: Overview of the Project Evaluation Process



Step 1: Project Identification and Solicitation

The first step in the process is to identify the list of projects. The transportation and highway projects are identified from either: the Long Range Transportation Plans, fund requests from municipalities, agencies and transportation providers, and from programmed projects from the current TIP/STIP.

The PRHTA and Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW) has developed a constraint statewide long range transportation plan and the metropolitan (regional) long range transportation plans, that establishes the multimodal policy and the future investment in a twenty years planning horizon. These plans are fundamental in the decision of which projects will move forward for programming and execution.

The other form that projects are identified is through the solicitation of petitions also known as called for projects. The PRMPO has a Public Involvement Plan that describes the process resumed at the introduction. Municipalities, transit operator agencies and other eligible organizations filled the solicitation form of the respective federal program and, submit it to the Central Planning and Coordination Work Group (CPCWG). This committee in union with the PRMPO Technical Committee is responsible of revising all petitions and subsequently making the screening and the evaluation of the request for funds for a project.

Other transportation projects that are revised and considered in this phase are the ones that were previously included in the TIPs and STIP. These projects that already had funds programmed from previous fiscal year are re-submitted by the original petitioner or recipient in other to reschedule the initiation of the project.

Step 2. Project Screening

PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA – PROPOSAL

Once the petitions for funds for projects are identified and submitted to the CPCWG, this group sorts them between transit, non-motorized and highway projects.

a. Transit Projects Petitions:

Most of the transit projects petitions come from municipalities and transit operating agencies (Metropolitan Bus Authority, Maritime Authority) requests. Some of which are FTA grantees and other sub-grantees. This status will determine for which kind of funding or FTA program the petitioner or applicant is eligible. The other determining factor of FTA funding eligibility is the location of the applicant in relation to Urbanized (UZA) or Non-Urbanized Areas, since some programs establishes which activities and projects qualified for fund depending on the UZA. Is the transit provider in San Juan UZA (SJUZA), Aguadilla UZA (AUZA), UZAs under 200,000 population (UZAs) or in a Non-Urbanized Area (Rural)

The transit projects petitions are categorized into three types: Capital Projects, Maintenance, and Operating Assistance. But all transit funding request or project solicitation shall present a document with the following information:

Check	Eligibility Factor for new petitions
a-	Is it grantee of FTA funds or sub-grantee_____
b-	Is it a member of the SJUZA ___; AUZA___; UZAs: ___; Rural___; State ___
c-	What type of project: Capital Project___; Maintenance ___; Operating Assistance ___
	1. A justification of the project, the need and its benefit
	2. Demonstrate how the project will improve mobility and safety and security of the transit service
	3. Evidence of the availability of the local match. The requested funds for the project must present a reasonable cost and provide evidence of an independent cost estimate.
	4. The applicant or petitioner must meet all Federal requirements: has an updated Drug and Alcohol Program, a has a ADA compliant Paratransit Service.
	5. Demonstrate local support: Project identified through an ongoing public involvement process
	6. If grantee: the petitioner shall not have opened findings with the federal agencies
	7. Is the project identified and prioritized in the current 2040 PRLRTP and TIP/STIP;
	8. Demonstrate how the project will improve mobility and safety and security of the transit service

b. Highway Projects:

The PRHTA is the recipient and administrator of the FHWA funds. Through the FHWA programs (“National Highway Performance Program” (NHPP), “Highway Safety Improvement Program” (HSIP); and any of the activities supported in Chapter 1, Title 23) Puerto Rico receives funds for planning, capital investment, safety, and acquisition projects.

Any new petition for projects has to provide the following information in order to be considered for evaluation:

- Petitioner:
- Date of Application:
- Number of Road:
- Project Description:
- Justification:
- Priority (if the petitioner has requested more than one project)
- Previous study plans: Estimated Cost

The screening process is finished once CPCWG completes the request for information and the revision of the applicant's data for the project.

Step 3. Project Evaluation

PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA – PROPOSAL

The Central Planning and Coordination Work Group (CPCWG) will use the answers to these questions to determine whether to move a project forward into the prioritization process. It is important to recognize that a “no” answer to any of the screening questions does not necessarily mean a project cannot move into the evaluation process. The CPCWG will need to consider the circumstances and context associated with a project that does not pass this screening and may decide, based on these considerations, that the project is still eligible for advancement. Also, as part of the screening process, a multidisciplinary group (GIPP), from PRHTA schedules field visits to the proposed projects area with the purpose of evaluating the level of safety issues and magnitude of the work to be done.

The CPCWG in coordination with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) established the project priority process. The Municipal Coordinator, represented by the Executive Secretary of the MPO is required to meet individually or in group with each of the majors or authorized planning representative to discuss project selection and prioritization projects within each region.

The purpose of the meeting is to review and validate the projects in the current TIP/STIP and consider other requests for new projects. All projects included in the TIP/STIP must be consistent with the goals and strategies laid out in the financially constrained portion of the LRTP and with the laws and federal regulations.

If projects are identified that are not consistent, LRTP amendments must be processed and approved before they can be included in the TIP/STIP. The result of the meeting is a prioritization of projects within each Region of the Island.

Due to the dynamic nature of any highway project changes might be necessary to the actual projects included on the TIP/STIP as priorities and policies change. The process for amending the TIP/STIP varies depending on the type of the change required and whether a project needs to be amended. (Refer to Public Participation Process, and MPO)

To maintain fiscal constraint, the addition of a new project may result in the elimination or reprogramming of another project from the TIP/STIP.

After the meeting with each of the majors, the Municipal Coordinator must hold a joint meeting with all of the majors to select and prioritize projects for the entire Island.

If there are issues which need further discussion, the Municipal Coordinator may choose to delay the adoption and presentation of the TIP to the MPO until those issues have been resolved.

During the prioritization process any comments received during the public comment period are tracked by the Director of the Federal Coordination Office (FCO) and the Office of the Director of Programming and Special Studies Area (PSSA). The FCO and PSSA responses will be summarized and then provided to the Municipal Coordinator.

The petitions of new projects not included on the LRTP need to be revised first by the Interdisciplinary Group of Pre-Planning (IGPP).

The Interdisciplinary Group of Pre-Planning (GIPP)

The Interdisciplinary Group of Pre-Planning (GIPP, by its acronym in Spanish) was created with the purpose of collecting and analyzing information of requests for road and bridge project and other transportation related needs to improve the

PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA – PROPOSAL

Authority's road network and services. The main objective of the group is to provide a preliminary feasibility evaluation of project requests for the selection of those most likely to be included in the local Permanent Improvements Program and federal aid programs (TIP and STIP).

The requests are received by different ways, including:

1. Letters from Municipalities Majors
2. Senate and Representatives Chambers Resolutions
3. Government Agencies letters
4. Internal referrals
5. Letters from citizens

The types of requests most received are;

1. Repaving
2. Widening of roads
3. General improvements including geometric changes, safety barriers, lighting, signaling, pavement marking and others
4. Bridges replacements
5. New connectors within existing roads
6. Pedestrian and bicycle routes

Composition of the GIP:

The GIPP is composed from representatives of different areas within the Authority. These persons are assigned according to their expertise and the type of request. The areas of specialty include: Construction Management, Design, Environmental Studies, Pavement Management, Strategic Planning and Traffic Engineering and Operations. Other areas may participate as required. The programming and Special Studies Area is held responsible of the GIPP duties.

Project evaluation:

The requests are evaluated following a criteria and valuation scale. The GIPP participants are asked to assess the requests independently from their expertise.

Criteria:

1. The need of services in terms of urgency, risk, congestion or accessibility.
2. Viability based on environmental, topography, archaeological, existing utilities, acquisition, overall cost and other factors.
3. Potential for development of other projects related to housing, commerce, industry, agriculture and tourism.
4. Needs compatible with the development of the community affected.
5. Consistency with the Municipal and State Land Use Programs.
6. Consistency with Municipal and State Transportation Plans.

Valuation scale:

The requests are valuated bases on a scale from 0 to 5, in which 5 means the most worthy value.

Report:

A brief report is prepared with the comments and recommendations of the GIPP participants. The report includes topographic and other pertinent maps, aerial photography, field photographs and cost estimate when possible. Other documents such as drawings, technical data and reference letters may be included as deemed necessary.

The multidisciplinary group uses a separate sheet as to document the observations of the site visits.

Step 4. Project Selection/Programming

The final step in the project prioritization and development process is project selection. The term “selection” relates to actual project implementation (rather than “prioritization”) and therefore relates directly to the programming of funds in the TIP/STIP. Project selection is therefore an element of the TIP/STIP and financing programming process.

Project selection criteria may include:

- Funding availability and commitment (federal/local);
- Public support; and/or
- Existence of supportive planning, environmental and engineering studies.

Once the TIP has been approved by the MPO, it is include in the STIP and forwarded to the FHWA and FTA for their approval, and goes into effect at the beginning of the Federal fiscal year of October 1 to September 30. Copies are distributed to the MPO members and posted on the mentioned external website for public knowledge.

A project that does not meet the initial screening criteria may be identified for informational purposes in a PRLRTP appendix of “illustrative project” outside of fiscal constraint. The CPCWG may also decide to not further consider such a project and drop it from the project list.

