

I-09.01 Project Selection Process

I-09.01.01 Project Prioritization

Each year in October, the Office of Transportation Programs requests the districts to submit their Interstate and non-Interstate roadway project priorities. These priorities are submitted over the mainframe computer system. At the time of this request, data is available for all state highway segments for viewing by the District Engineer while setting the district project priorities. The priorities software allows them to sort the district roadway segments by various categories, such as worst pavement distress, worst ride, highest traffic, or highest maintenance cost. The District Engineers then consider other sources of information along with the technical data when setting the priorities. Consideration is given to comments received from the public throughout the year. Consideration is also given to issues such as eliminating gaps in routes caused by short segment load restrictions. The districts receive input from shippers regarding load restrictions throughout the year, although particularly so during the spring load restriction period. The priority submissions are then made to the Office of Transportation Programs based upon the district review of the technical data and public input. The priority submission includes the district's proposed type of improvement (regrade or overlay, for example), a rough cost estimate, and of course their opinion of each project's priority in numerical form.

The district priority lists are submitted about December 1 each year. The Office of Transportation Programs and the Planning and Programming Division review the priorities to ensure agreement on the proposed costs. A review of the roadway widths and traffic volumes is also made to determine if a roadway, on which an overlay is requested, is in fact wide enough to accommodate the overlay, according to appropriate department design guides.

I-09.01.02 Funding Scenarios

The Central Office then begins developing funding scenarios by federal fiscal year for the Interstate and non-Interstate programs. Target funding levels are used based upon the total obligational authority forecast for the upcoming fiscal years, minus funds reserved for smaller programs such as urban, county, bridge, planning, and safety programs. Generally, the upcoming fiscal year's funding is known in October. The funding scenarios are developed by assigning district priorities to the funding scenarios mostly in the order given by the districts. For example, all priority 1's across the state will usually be assigned to the first fiscal year where funds are available. Some priority 2's and 3's may also be used until a target funding level is attained for the fiscal year. Five years or more are usually built into the scenarios. Maps are then prepared, and meetings are scheduled with the District Engineers to review the proposed schedules. During these review discussions, connectivity of major routes across district lines will be an issue of concern. For example, actions to eliminate the load restrictions on long lengths of Interregional highways might be proposed. This may require putting one district's priority 3 or 4 ahead of another district's 2 in order to accomplish this. These changes are coordinated with, and concurred in, by each affected district.

The program adjustments are then made by the Central Office, and a final 3-year program is sent to the NDDOT Director for approval. This usually happens about March 15 each year. While the major Interstate and non-Interstate programs are being developed, smaller programs such as bridge and safety programs are also being developed through a less formal process using the bridge management system and the accident records system.

I-09.01.03 STIP

NDDOT annually updates a 3-year project program/schedule that leads to the annual federally required Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The process takes up most of the year due to informal steps and formal steps required for the STIP, such as interaction with the three metropolitan planning organization's (MPO) Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP).

The Draft-STIP process begins after the March sign-off on the 3-year program by the NDDOT Director. A news release is prepared that generally lists the rural projects in each district, as well as the city projects in non-MPO areas. The MPO area projects are covered by a similar MPO TIP process. The news releases ask interested parties to comment on the proposed projects or to suggest additional projects. The comments are to be directed to the individual District Engineers. Any comments received by the districts are forwarded to the Central Office for consideration.

After the comment period, a draft STIP, which looks much like the final STIP, is prepared and sent to the districts. This document contains lists of projects by district and individual funding programs such as urban, county, safety, bridge, etc. A paid advertisement is sent out to statewide major newspapers stating that the document is available for review for 30 days at the district offices, and that any comments may be directed to the NDDOT Director. Normally, the comment period ends about August 1st. Comments that are received are then reviewed by the Central Office and adjustments are considered. The comments are identified and addressed either by adjustment to the program or by explanation of why an adjustment cannot be made.

The final STIP is then sent to the FHWA about the first week of September and sign-off is necessary by the FHWA Division Office and the Denver Region office of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). FTA reviews and approves because the STIP document also includes distribution of federal transit funds.

Sign-off is usually received prior to October 1, which is the beginning of the federal fiscal year. Federal aid projects cannot be bid which are not listed in a past or current approved, or amended, STIP. Emergency Relief projects, because of their unpredictable nature, are exempt from the STIP process requirements.

To view a copy of the NDDOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program go to the web at www.state.nd.us/dot/manuals.html.

I-09.02 Project Development Scheduling and Control

I-09.02.01 Milestone

Milestone is the department's programming tool used by all the preconstruction divisions for monitoring progress and scheduling activities for various projects. It provides for the scheduling and monitoring of a multiple number of activities required prior to the actual bid opening for a construction project. The Milestone program furnishes a ready identification of the sequence of necessary events, shows the interrelationship of the activity, highlights the concurrence of activities, and establishes a time schedule that will permit the study of anticipated completion dates and reflects required lead times. See Section II-02.

I-09.02.01.01 Bid Opening Schedule

Projects listed in Milestone are taken from the current bid opening schedule. They are entered in Milestone to schedule and monitor project activities.

- a. Two Year Bid Opening Schedule - Generally, projects are on a two-year bid opening schedule.
- b. Additional Lead Time - Grading and widening projects require more than two years of lead time from initial activities to bid opening.

I-09.02.01.02 Projected Dates

The Milestone Committee establishes projected dates for the various activities. Meetings are scheduled when needed. Committee representatives include Design, Right of Way Section, Surveys & Photogrammetry, Environmental, Bridge, Planning and Programming, Local Government, and Materials and Research.

The Committee Chair pencils in the dates agreed upon by the committee. The Programming Section is responsible for entering their information into Milestone. Other divisions enter their own information.

Projected dates are set for the various activities considering the following conditions:

- a. Workloads
- b. Available personnel
- c. Already established bid opening date

I-09.02.01.03 Changes

- a. Bid Opening Dates - The Programming Section revises the dates in the Project Master. The dates are automatically changed in Milestone.
- b. Completed Dates - Each division is responsible for their activities. They must enter the dates as the activities are completed. The Programming Section updates tables, models, etc.
- c. Adding/deleting new activities
- d. Deleting Projects
 - (1). Dropped
 - (2). Indefinitely postponed
- e. Corrections

I-09.02.01.04 Requesting and Distribution of Computer Reports

The Programming Section is responsible for requesting and distributing computer reports. Total activity listings are distributed to all Milestone Committee members before each Milestone meeting. The Section maintains a list of other Milestone users. New total activity listings are distributed to these users periodically. This is done at the direction of the Transportation Programs Director, and the frequency of the distribution is determined by the amount of changes made in the listing. Several other reports are also available. Requests are submitted to the Programming Section. This section will fill out a “run request” stating the type of report and the number of copies, and submit it to Computer Services.

If Milestone reports for selected projects are desired, they may be obtained by following the instructions in the Milestone Users Manual, prepared by the Planning and Programming Division.

See Appendix I-09 A following this section for an example of a typical Milestone report.

I-09.02.02 Project Development Schedule (PDS)

I-09.02.02.01 Purpose

PDS meetings are held every two weeks on Tuesday mornings. The purpose of PDS is to discuss the status of the development of all upcoming projects and ensure the designer attends to any necessary details for the upcoming projects. Members of the PDS group include Design, Right of Way, Surveys & Photogrammetry, Environmental, Bridge, Planning & Programming, Local Government, Materials & Research, Construction Services, Maintenance & Engineering Services, FHWA, Office of Project Development, and Office of Transportation Programs.

I-09.02.02.02 PDS Report

A PDS report is developed from the Bid Letting Schedule. All upcoming projects for the year are included. As each bid opening is completed, those projects are dropped from the list. Comments are added to the list after each meeting and copies are distributed to PDS members. County projects are not included in the PDS list.