

**Regional Solicitation Projects: Scope Change Consultation Process.  
Federal Program Delivery Work Group: September 10, 2012**

**Overview**

Projects selected through the regional solicitation process have a defined scope, or description of improvements to be constructed or implemented. The project scope is the basis for how well these projects address safety, congestion, air quality, and other criteria used in the evaluation. Because these projects were selected to receive federal transportation funds based on the benefits they provide, the project scope is important.

From the FHWA perspective, the project scope is important to the FHWA because they use it as the basis for authorizing the funds for the project to be built. The FHWA staff must compare the scope of the project as described in the TIP to the project scope in the environmental document they review. As stewards of the federal funds, the two project scopes must match otherwise the FHWA will not authorize the use of federal funds to build or implement the project. The FHWA is concerned about oversight of public involvement and accountability to the public.

From the TAB perspective, these projects were awarded federal funds because they were evaluated and provide the most benefit to the travelling public. Projects are ranked by the cumulative score of many weighted criteria. Changes in the projects scope could affect the benefits of the project, reducing its score and possibly affecting its rank among the scored projects. The TAB wants to ensure that the benefits from the re-scoped projects are substantially the same as the original project and justify using the federal funds that were awarded to the original project. It is important to the TAB that any change in project scope does not substantially reduce the project's benefits and value to the public, especially if it would mean the revised project scope would not have scored as well as the original scope and may not have ranked high enough to be selected.

**What is a scope change?**

The TAB understands that the projects submitted in the regional solicitation are usually conceptual in nature and are subject to change during design and environmental study. A limited number of project scope change requests are likely to be necessary and the TAB adopted a policy in March 2011 on how to evaluate them.

A consultation process among the FHWA, MnDOT and the MPO would be helpful to determine whether a formal scope change and TIP amendment is needed, or whether the change in scope is minor and can be done administratively by MnDOT. The project description in the TIP and STIP can serve as the project scope for the purpose of making this determination. For these purposes, a scope change is considered to be any revision that changes the description of a regionally-selected project in the TIP and STIP.

Scope Changes requiring approval and a formal TIP amendment:

- Any change that triggers a formal TIP amendment (see guidance);
- Any change that may reduce the estimate of benefits and project score and lower its rank within its solicitation category to the degree where the revised scope may not justify selection.

Some examples where a formal scope change is likely to be necessary:

- Adding significant elements to a project
- Removing significant elements from a project
- Changing the termini of a project
- Changing the number of parking spaces in a park & ride facility
- Changing from reconstruction to replacement and vice versa

Scope Changes allowed through an administrative amendment:

- Slight changes in bike or pedestrian trail route alignment while still making the major connections and keeping the same termini
- Removal or addition of minor items, e.g., benches, waste receptacles, minor signing, etc...
- Change in the design of aesthetic items i.e. lighting, railings, benches, etc...
- Addition of items due to normal detail design of a project (e.g., noise walls, retaining walls, storm sewers, etc...)
- Change in roadway or trail profile, alignment, surfacing if the initial project termini and connections are not affected.

Some examples where an administrative amendment is likely to be used:

- Addition of street furniture and wayfinding signs to a trail or streetscape project
- Change in the type of railing to be used on a pedestrian bridge; addition of decorative panels on a bridge abutment or sidewalls
- Construction of an additional entrance and exit from a park and ride facility
- Additional work to lower the profile of a road to provide adequate overhead clearance

### **When is a scope change a new project?**

The FHWA does not approve goals, they approve projects. Although the TAC and TAB may approve a scope change and TIP amendment if it still meets the intent or serves the same purpose as the original project, the FHWA will not approve a TIP amendment if they judge the revised scope to be so different from the original scope that it is a different project. The region needs to develop boundaries for scope changes.

The project description in the TIP and STIP list the type of work, the most significant construction elements, the project location and length, where applicable. This could be considered the definition of

a project's scope of work. A proposed scope change will be considered a new project not subject to the scope change evaluation if it:

- Changes the type of work. (e.g., intersection improvement to construction of a full or partial grade-separated interchange; purchase of transit buses to purchase of light rail vehicles; switching transit operating funds to a transit capital purchase or construction)
- Replaces the main construction elements. (pedestrian bridge to a pedestrian tunnel; construction of a bike/pedestrian bridge to at-grade intersection crossing treatments)
- Relocates the project away from the defined problem or need. (switching transit start-up service from one market area to another)
- Moving funding from one project to another. (like it says, moving funds awarded to a project on County Road A to the same, similar or different work on County Road Z)
- Significantly change the size of the project. (reconstruct two lane bridge to reconstruct as a four lane bridge)

### **Consultation and Scope Change Request Process**

Project sponsors must initiate scope change requests with the Transportation Advisory Board Coordinator. The short process described below could be adopted into policy as how the region decides whether a scope change needs to go through the formal process with a TIP amendment or just done through an Administrative Modification.

1. Project sponsor informs the TAB Coordinator that it wishes to change their project. Preferably, the project sponsor would provide a written description of the scope change and a map or schematics showing how the proposed scope change affects the project.
2. The TAB Coordinator may consult with MnDOT Metro State Aid and the FHWA to discuss the extent of the changes and whether the scope change could impact the projects benefits, score and rank among the other projects in its category and solicitation year.
3. By agreement, the TAB Coordinator may contact the project sponsor and provide directions on how to request a scope change and TIP amendment through the TAC, TAB and Metropolitan Council. Also by agreement, the TAB Coordinator may inform the project sponsor that the proposed scope change does not trigger a formal scope change and TIP amendment, and the minor scope change can be performed through an Administrative Modification. The TAB Coordinator will inform the TAC Funding and Programming Committee of the Administrative Modification.
4. By agreement, the TAB Coordinator may inform the project sponsor that the proposed revisions exceed the limits of a scope change and is actually a new project. The project sponsor will also be informed that the request will not be processed through the TAC and TAB.