

## Chapter 6: The Program Development Process for Project Identification

### Public Participation

Two processes have been established to solicit public input for transportation projects. These processes are the annual workshops and annual county consultation tours. Annual workshops are held throughout the state in small urban and rural locations in October and November. The purpose of the annual workshops is to inform and assist the public and local entities in applying and submitting applications for transportation improvement projects. A *Project Submittal Application* is presented and explained along with the process for applying for Enhancement funding.



County consultation tours begin in April of each year and end in July. This public participation process is designed to collaborate with all fifteen county commissions, the four MPO's, and the twenty-three tribal governments. The purpose of the consultation is to discuss proposed projects for the upcoming fiscal year. This meeting provides an opportunity for the commissioners and tribal leaders to meet with NDOT officials and ask questions about transportation issues in their represented area.

The Program Development Division is charged with the programming of a wide range of projects on an ongoing basis throughout the year. The primary mechanism for establishing NDOT's program planning process is the Transportation System Projects (TSP) Manual. This manual includes the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and the Annual Work Program (AWP), inclusive of both short and long-range elements. The Transportation System Projects Manual is presented annually to the State Transportation Board for acceptance. Following the Board's review and acceptance, the STIP document, which lists all federally funded capital and non-capital transportation projects, is forwarded to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for approval.

### Project Submittal Application Packet

A Project Submittal Application Packet includes: 1. Instructions for filling out the Project Submittal Application form, 2. The criteria used to evaluate the application, and 3. A blank application, including examples of a capacity and safety project. The application is intended to ascertain the following: 1. The need/deficiency of the proposed project, 2. The specific cost of the project inclusive of identified funding sources, environmental impact, right-of-way, and utility relocation, 3. If the proposed project interfaces with the community master plan? 4. If there is interaction between the applicant, the county, tribal entity and/or city, and lastly 5. If any opposition or obstacle associated with the project have been identified.

### **Project Evaluation Process**

The process for evaluating Project Submittal Applications is as follows:

1. Copies of the applications addressing safety, landscaping and enhancement issues will be sent to NDOT's Traffic Safety, Roadway Design and Program Development Division, respectively, to verify if they are eligible projects under each program.
2. Copies of the applications for projects in an urbanized area will be sent to the respective Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for their review.
3. An evaluation committee will score all applications, using a Project Evaluation Form. Based on the score, applications will be sorted into high, medium and low groups.
4. When all calculations are completed, a summary listing of the highest applications will be provided to the Director for his final selection.

### **Special Considerations for Congressionally-Earmarked Projects**

Some projects are moved forward through the political process to receive dedicated "earmarked" funding from Congress. Often, these projects coincide directly with established NDOT projects that have gone through the regular programming process. In those rare cases when projects not already on the short-range element receive funding, the Department will reevaluate the merit of the project in light of the available funding.

### **Set-Asides for Sound Wall and Landscaping Programs**

NDOT places a high priority on minimizing the impacts of its programs and projects on the public. Although they are sometimes required through the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) for noise abatement, sound walls also satisfy aesthetic concerns for many homeowners who wish to be shielded from highway noise. Similarly, the visual appeal of the state's transportation infrastructure is an important component in the planning process. NDOT recently convened a Landscape Advisory Committee, and the resulting master plan will maximize the beauty and visual appeal of Nevada's roadways. Both programs are funded through the Department's annual budget process. The State Transportation Board has adopted policies regarding the criteria for funding these programs.