

Recommended Criteria for Prioritization of Capital Projects to be Submitted by CDOT to the FTA in Response to Section 5309 Notices of Funding Availability

Draft 6/3/11

The FTA is expected to issue Notices of Funding Availability for Section 5309 funding for various types of capital grants. States will be asked to submit a consolidated statewide application on behalf of rural transit systems, along with any interested urbanized systems. FTA has suggested that prioritized applications are preferred.

CDOT has agreed to prioritize project lists and is coordinating with CASTA to better assure consistency in what is submitted. CDOT has solicited input on the criteria to be used for prioritizing projects from the Transit and Rail Advisory Committee, the Statewide Transportation Advisory Committee, the Transit and Intermodal Committee and the CASTA Board. There was a fairly strong consensus that applications should be reviewed on their merit rather than using a “one size fits all” prioritization process. This suggests a subjective evaluation process rather than one based on strictly defined criteria and metrics. At the same time, though, there are certain metrics deemed to be worthy of use (e.g., vehicle mileage) as well as certain category preferences (e.g., replacement preferred over expansion) that are not necessarily compatible with a pure review of individual merit.

These seemingly conflicting preferences suggest a set of criteria that are somewhat broad and that evaluate projects on their merit and then compare them to other projects, then scored relative to the same families of projects. For example, an Eastern Plains project should be reviewed on its merit and not directly compared with a mountain resort project, but both would be evaluated based on the criteria established for the particular FTA “boutique” program being solicited.

Special weight would be given based on certain categorical priorities. That is, all things being equal, a higher priority in the scoring process will be given to funding replacement rolling stock over expansion rolling stock and facilities—except to the extent any would conflict with stated FTA priorities for any of the “boutique” grants being solicited.

Scoring and Priorities

Each individual request for funding will be evaluated and scored based on the criteria below. The criteria are divided according to three established project types: Replacement Rolling stock, Expansion Rolling Stock and Facilities. Equipment requests are considered to be low priority at this time and not competitive on a nationwide basis. Furthermore, there are other sources of funding (e.g., FASTER and Sections 5310, 5311, 5316 and 5317) that might be more appropriate for equipment needs. There will also be sub-categories, such as size categories of rolling stock. Each application can receive a possible score of 10 points, broken out as set forth below.

Since each FTA “boutique” program announced through a Notice of Funding Availability (e.g., livability, state of good repair) will have its own particular criteria, those FTA criteria will be a scoring criteria and included within the “Special Considerations” categories below. However, to the extent that those

criteria are minimum eligibility qualifications, individual project requests may be rejected if they fail to meet those minimum eligibility qualifications.

A. Replacement Rolling Stock

- Criteria 1: Mileage and Usage (7 possible points)
 - Higher mileage vehicles will be scored higher than lower mileage ones, but within their own bus category (heavy duty 35-40 foot coaches; <35 foot coaches; body-on-chassis/cutaways; vans/minivans);
 - Average miles per year for all vehicles may be considered, with consideration to type of vehicle and service;
 - FTA guidelines will be used to gauge useful life; for example, a 35-40 ft. coach should be approaching its useful life (500,000 miles or 12 years) to be considered;
 - Vehicle age may be considered, but miles will be given a higher priority in ranking;
 - Applicants with a lower spare ratio will generally be scored higher than those with a higher spare ratio; spare ratio should generally not exceed 20%; smaller agencies (< 25 vehicles) will be considered on a case-by-case basis, given that measuring spare ratio with demand-responsive service is more difficult;
- Criteria 2: Special Considerations (3 possible points)
 - The criteria specified in the particular FTA NOFA;
 - Higher scoring will be awarded to applicants that demonstrate a good state of repair through effective preventive maintenance programs or Transit Asset Management programs;
 - Higher scoring will be awarded based on whether an applicant has and follows a capital replacement plan; stronger plans are those that are formalized within the organization. It is recognized that many applicants have not yet adopted formal capital replacement plans; therefore, applicants may be evaluated on how they have made decisions for replacing capital over the past five years to ensure capital expenditures are timely, staggered, and designed to avoid service disruptions;

B. Expansion Rolling Stock

- Criteria 1: Demonstrated Need and Business Case for Expansion (7 possible points)
 - Higher scoring will be awarded to projects that clearly demonstrate the need for the expanded service in terms of documented ridership studies and community support;
 - Higher scoring will be awarded to projects that make an effective a business case for the expansion that outlines anticipated costs, revenues and sustainability; a formal business plan is preferable;
- Criteria 2: Special Considerations (3 possible points)
 - The criteria specified in the particular FTA NOFA;
 - Higher scoring will be awarded based on spare ratio; applicants with a lower spare ratio will generally be scored higher than those with a higher spare ratio;

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C. Facilities

- **Criteria 1:** Readiness and Demonstrated Timetable (4 possible points)
 - Higher priority to those that are shovel ready (NEPA clearance, at least 30% design completed, location sited)
 - The finishing of existing projects would be a higher priority than the first stage of a long-term project; projects that are long-term score higher if a reasonable phasing plan is identified;
- **Criteria 2:** Project Purpose, Cost Savings and Efficiency (4 possible points)
 - Reasonableness of the financial request relative to the amount of funding available nationally;
 - Higher priority to those projects that demonstrate that the project would produce real cost savings for the transit program or create service efficiencies, e.g., by consolidating maintenance services from three garages into one, or by extending vehicle life by x%; defensible cost savings should be provided and expressed as a % of total transit budget;
 - Higher priority to those requests that can clearly demonstrate the facility project could increase ridership rather than merely maintain existing ridership;
- **Criteria 3:** Special Considerations (2 possible points)
 - The criteria specified in the particular FTA NOFA;
 - Higher priority to those projects that demonstrate they were developed in partnership with their community and have a high degree of support;
 - Expansion of facilities will be considered if backed by a strong, defensible business case that demonstrates the need for the facility and for growth in the program it supports;

Scoring

Because certain categorical priorities have been agreed upon (e.g., replacement rolling stock over expansion rolling stock), the following procedure will be used, unless it conflicts with the priorities of any of the FTA “boutique” programs:

- The score of each expansion rolling stock project and each facility project will be multiplied by .8 in order to provide higher priority to replacement rolling stock.

- If an applicant has both replacement rolling stock and expansion rolling stock requests, they should be described and justified separately, for they will be scored separately. The same is true of facility projects.
- If an applicant has more than one rolling stock request, they will be considered together, except that if any that are clearly less qualified (e.g., based on mileage), CDOT may remove them and consider them separately.

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