

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

MDOT Prioritization – Scoring Model & Application Process

Prioritization Process Context

Why did MDOT develop a new prioritization process for major transportation projects? How is it different from the previous process, Chapter 30?

The new prioritization process builds on lessons learned from Maryland’s previous transportation prioritization process, Chapter 30. Identified opportunities for improvements have included greater transparency and a stronger connection between project scoring and selection.

The new approach responds to directives from MDOT Secretary Paul Wiedefeld to develop a prioritization process for surface transportation capacity projects requesting funding in the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). It is intended to deliver a transparent, objective scoring model to drive project selection. It aligns with the Moore-Miller Administration’s vision for data-driven, heart-led efforts to make a safer, more affordable, more competitive Maryland that leaves no one behind.

Key updates relate to the criteria and measures used for project evaluation, select project and applicant eligibility parameters, and the frequency of project scoring and selection. More information about the new process can be found in the Project Prioritization Technical Guide, available via the MDOT website (www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=83).

How much funding will be available for the prioritization process? How is this amount determined?

The amount of available funding will be announced prior to each round of prioritization. It will be determined by the MDOT Secretary.

Funds will be made available for the major surface transportation expansion projects after MDOT has funded other core needs such as maintenance and operations, debt service, and state of good repair needs.

How frequently will MDOT conduct the project prioritization process? How does this schedule relate to the development of the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP)?

MDOT will conduct the prioritization process and select new capacity expansion projects every other year. Previously, the Chapter 30 process was conducted annually. Moving to a biennial cadence will not change the overall amount of funding available, but it will increase the amount of funding available for award to projects in a given scoring round. This will allow funding to be fully programmed in the CTP via the prioritization process, creating greater certainty for project sponsors and partners. In the off-years, when MDOT is not actively soliciting and scoring projects, staff will conduct a review of the prioritization process and make improvements based on the assessment results. The CTP will continue to be developed on an annual basis.

When will the new prioritization process be implemented?

The first round of the new prioritization process will be a pilot round with no funding in 2025. The application submission period will run from January 15 until February 18, 2025. The next round of the prioritization process will be determined based on availability of resources and is anticipated to take place in 2026 or 2027.

Project Submission

What projects are required to submit an application to be considered for funding in the CTP?

With the exception of those identified below, all surface transportation capacity projects requesting between \$5 million and \$400 million in the CTP for the expansion portion of a project must be submitted for prioritization in order to be considered for inclusion in the CTP. This includes highway, transit, and non-motorized transportation projects.

Expansion projects with the following Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds do not need to be submitted: CMAQ, TAP, Carbon Reduction Program, PROTECT, HSIP, Highway-Railway Grade Crossing, and Statewide Planning. Expansion projects with the following Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds do not need to be submitted: 5307/5340 - Urbanized Area Formula; 5337 - State of Good Repair; 5304 - Statewide Planning; 5310 - Elderly and Disabled; 5311 - Rural Formula Program; 5329 - State Safety Oversight; and 5339 - Bus and Bus Facilities. All other expansion projects meeting the criteria described above must be submitted.

Who is eligible to submit projects for prioritization? How many projects can be proposed by each applicant?

The following types of entities may submit projects for prioritization:

- County government
- Municipal government
- State government agency
- Independent city
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- Locally Operated Transit System (LOTS)

All proposing entities have a limited number of applications they may submit per round. Except in the case of state agencies, this limit is structured in tiers based on the population of the proposing entity and the project size (Table 1). For state agencies, the limit is structured in tiers based on project size only.

Table 1. Project Application Limits

Proposing Entity Population*	Projects with Costs** Over \$20M	Projects with Costs** of \$20M or Less	Total Projects
Under 50,000	1 application	3 applications	4 applications
50,000- 500,000	2 applications	4 applications	6 applications
Over 500,000	4 applications	6 applications	10 applications
N/A (State Agency)	6 applications	10 applications	16 applications

* For LOTS, population size is based on the population of the jurisdiction served.

** State funding request, including federal funding that MDOT controls.

What are the eligibility requirements for projects submitted for prioritization?

To be scored, projects must have:

- a) a minimum level of design through the feasibility study;
 - b) a draft feasibility study to be published for public comment; and
 - c) an identified alternative for projects subject to an alternatives analysis.
- MDOT will screen submissions for eligibility prior to scoring.

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Projects that do not meet the eligibility requirements by the application deadline are not eligible to be considered for funding via the prioritization process that fiscal year.

Should projects previously submitted for scoring under the Ch. 30 model be resubmitted?

Project sponsors do not need to submit a full application under the new prioritization approach for projects previously scored under Chapter 30. They are required, however, to inform MDOT that they want the project scored under Chapter 30 to be considered for the new prioritization program and provide any additional information required to score the project under the new approach.

How does an applicant submit a project for prioritization?

Proposing entities may submit project applications through the Maryland OneStop portal (onestop.md.gov/). In years when scoring is conducted, the application period will open in January and close in February. Proposing entities must submit separate applications for each project. Please consult the MDOT website for additional details, updates, and key dates (www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=83). A guide to registering a new account on Maryland OneStop is also available at the same link.

What information is needed for a project application?

For each submitted project, proposing entities must have a feasibility study that includes basic project information, such as the project limits, a cost estimate, and a description of the proposed improvements and map of their locations.

Proposing entities should also be prepared to answer questions about additional attributes and benefits of their transportation projects, including safety improvements, included assets, and project scope.

Transit capacity project applications will require additional details including frequency/headway, travel time, and alignment.

More information about the information required for a project application can be found in the Project Prioritization Technical Guide, available via the MDOT website (www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=83).

Project Scoring & Selection

How will projects be evaluated?

MDOT will use the project application data to evaluate each project and calculate a score based on quantitative measures in the areas of Safety, Accessibility & Mobility, Climate Change & the Environment, Social Equity, Economic Competitiveness, and Sustainable Land Use/Demand Management. All eligible major transportation projects, regardless of location or type, will be evaluated with the same measures.

A project's total score will be divided by its state funding request, including federal funding that MDOT controls, to calculate a Score-Cost Ratio (SCR). Projects will be ranked based on SCR.

More information about the evaluation measures and process can be found in the Project Prioritization Technical Guide, available via the MDOT website (www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=83).

What role will County Priority Letters play in project selection?

County Priority Letters will continue to play a role in the development of the CTP. The letters will not influence the quantitative evaluation of projects but will be considered by the Secretary and MDOT during the CTP development process.

MDOT will issue updated guidance for County Priority Letters in late 2024. The timing of submission of Letters will remain unchanged. Proposing entities may submit County Priority Letters via the Maryland OneStop portal (onestop.md.gov/).

How do results from the prioritization process affect which projects are selected for funding in the CTP?

MDOT will use the new prioritization process' results to drive project selection. After projects are evaluated, the project rankings and the list of projects selected for the CTP will be published for public review and input during the CTP tour. The MDOT Secretary may then make changes to the list of selected projects, if desired, based on factors such as public input or geographic equity.

The Secretary will present a final list to a public commission at a public meeting for review and public discussion. Should there be a decision to deviate from the rankings, MDOT will provide a written rationale for that decision to support transparency in the decision-making process. Projects selected for funding and inclusion in the CTP will have their full project funding — through construction — reflected in the CTP.

Therefore, project proposals must include all remaining unfunded phases, rather than focusing exclusively on one, single phase.

Additional Information

Is MDOT going to evaluate projects using the Chapter 30 process in 2025?

No, MDOT does not plan to evaluate projects using the Chapter 30 process in 2025. Rather, it encourages applicants to submit projects for evaluation under the new prioritization process.

I have additional questions about my project application and/or the prioritization process. Where can I learn more?

The following resources provide additional information on the prioritization process and are (or will be made) available via the MDOT Prioritization Process Website (www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=83):

- Prospective Applicant Informational Session Recordings
- Project Prioritization Technical Guide
- OneStop Web Portal New User Instructions

The project application will be available via the Maryland OneStop Portal (onestop.md.gov/).

Please reach out to MDOT with any further questions about project applications and/or the prioritization process at prioritization@mdot.maryland.gov. Proposing entities are encouraged to coordinate with MDOT prior to submitting applications to ensure all the necessary data and eligibility requirements are met.