



Project Evaluation and Program Selection Process



FY 2021-2022 Call for Projects

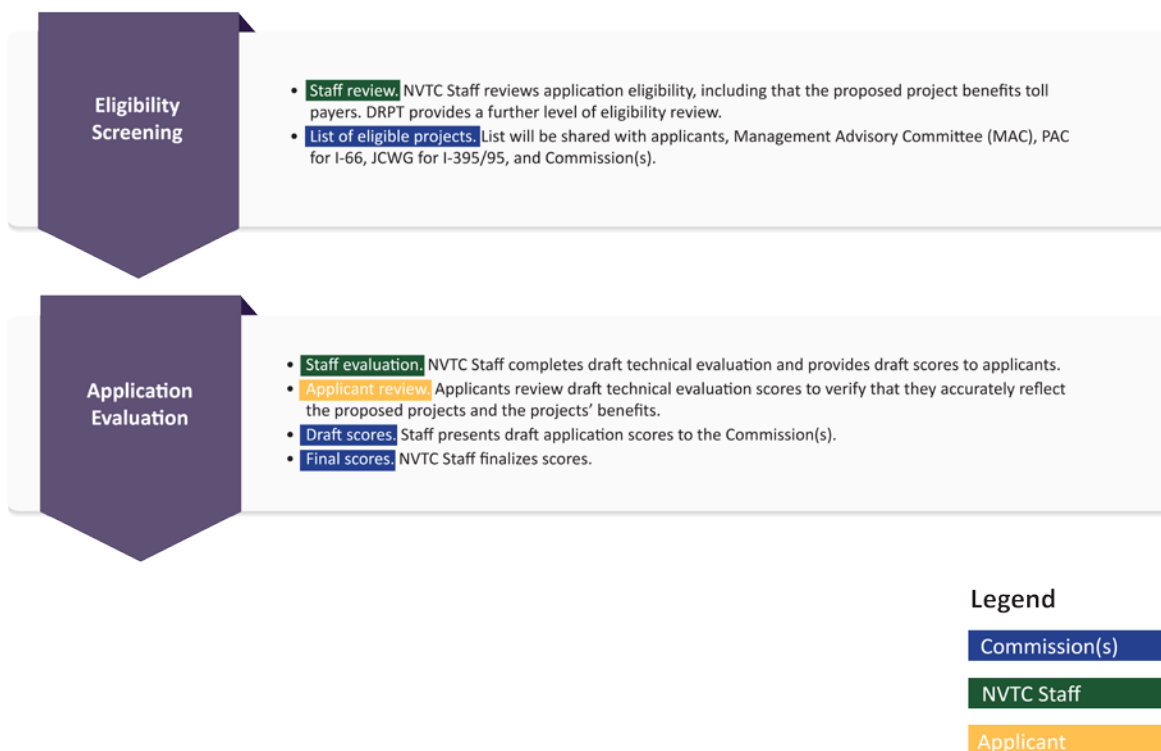
Note: the following is excerpted from an earlier version of the Commuter Choice Recipient Handbook that applied to this call for projects. For current guidance on the program, please visit the [Commuter Choice Resources page](#).



Chapter 5 Project Evaluation

NVTC staff will evaluate applications in accordance with the Commission-approved review process (NVTC approval for I-66, both NVTC and PRTC for I-395/95). The evaluation process will derive from the requirements and improvement goals in the MOA, as well as Commission policy. The review process entails eligibility review and, for all eligible applications, development of project scores. **Figure 9** shows the key steps in the evaluation process.

Figure 9: Key Steps in the Evaluation Process



5.1 Eligibility Screening

Each application will be screened to determine if it meets the eligibility criteria established in the corridor's MOA. For an overview of the eligibility criteria, see **Chapter 2** for I-66 Commuter Choice and **Chapter 3** for I-395/95 Commuter Choice. Considerations include that the proposed project bears a reasonable relationship to the toll facility and offers sufficient benefits to toll payers. NVTC may request additional information from applicants to help determine projects' eligibility. Eligible applications will be presented to the Commission(s) and advanced to the evaluation phase; NVTC will notify applicants with ineligible projects.

5.2 Application Evaluation

All eligible applications will be scored according to the Commission-approved technical evaluation process. The full set of eligible applications received in response to each two-year call for projects will be

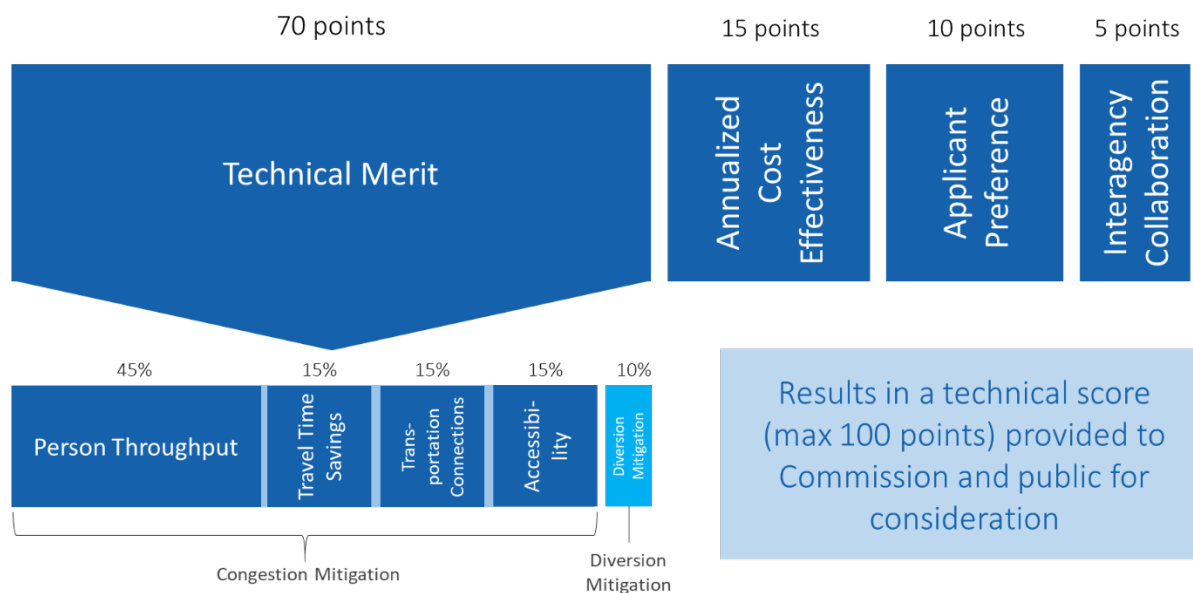
scored as a single set. The current approved process is shown in **Figure 10** and consists of the following four criteria, the scores for which are added to form a single score out of a maximum of 100 points:

- Technical Merit (i.e., the expected ability of the project to address some or all of the Commuter Choice Improvement Goals) – maximum 70 points
- Annualized Cost Effectiveness (i.e., the impact created per million dollars of toll revenue investment accounting for the useful life of capital elements of the project) – maximum 15 points
- Applicant Preference (i.e., how the project ranks in priority or preference among the other projects submitted by each specific applicant) – maximum 10 points
- Interagency Collaboration (i.e., how the project reflects partnership and coordination between two or more agencies/jurisdictions) – maximum 5 points

Each element of the project score is calculated relative to the other projects in the application year. The intent is to provide an assessment of which potential projects will have greater impacts compared to the other submitted projects, and to align with processes used by other discretionary programs. The project score, together with public input and the constraints of the available funding, inform the list of projects that is recommended by the Commission(s) for final approval by the CTB.

The following subsections more fully describe the criteria and their measures.

Figure 10: Technical Evaluation Criteria



5.2.1 Technical Merit

The factors used to evaluate the technical merit of a project are weighted as a part of the total technical merit score and are shown in **Figure 3**. Each technical merit factor aligns with one or more of the Commuter Choice Improvement Goals. Projects are evaluated based on the degree to which they satisfy each technical merit factor. The technical merit measures of the project score are calculated relative to the other projects in the application year. The intent is to provide an assessment of which potential



projects will have greater impacts compared to the other submitted projects and to align with processes used by other discretionary programs.

5.2.1.1 Congestion Mitigation – Person Throughput (45%)

The objective of the person throughput factor is to assess the number of people and vehicles moved through the corridor by, or resulting from, a submitted project.

For projects primarily affecting non-motorized travel modes (e.g., bike, walk, and some TDM strategies), the project will be given a ‘Lower’ score if the project can be reasonably assumed to increase person throughput. If there are no expected changes to throughput, the project will be given ‘No Score.’

This scoring recognizes the throughput benefits of projects geared towards non-motorized modes, but also realizes those benefits may not be within the same scale as the throughput benefits potentially realized by projects geared towards motorized travel. However, if the project can be demonstrated to result in a strong increase in the corridor’s person throughput, the scoring methodology described for motorized travel modes may be applied.

For projects primarily affecting motorized travel modes (e.g., vehicular, transit, and some TDM strategies), the project will be assessed based on the calculated increase in person throughput divided by the number of vehicles involved in that increase. ‘Higher’ and ‘Medium,’ and ‘Lower’ scores will be distributed among projects based on this calculated result. The top third-highest persons per vehicle will be scored ‘Higher’, the second-highest third will be scored ‘Medium’, and the remaining third will be scored ‘Lower.’

5.2.1.2 Congestion Mitigation – Travel Time Savings (15%)

The objective of the travel time savings factor is to assess how well a project is suited to provide or support consistent travel time during congested periods for users of the corridor as well as to improve the operational efficiency of the transportation network.

Each project will be assigned a score of ‘Higher,’ ‘Medium,’ ‘Lower,’ or ‘No Score’ based on the likelihood of significant, moderate, minimal, or no reductions in per person congested travel time compared to a similar commute without the project.

Higher – the project is likely to result in reductions (30 percent or greater) in peak-direction, peak-hour total travel time per person

Medium – the project is likely to result in reductions (15 to 30 percent) in peak-direction, peak-hour total travel time per person

Lower – the project is likely to result in reductions (5 to 15 percent) in peak-direction, peak-hour total travel time per person

No Score – the project is likely to result in no change (less than 5 percent) in peak-direction, peak-hour travel time

Each project will be categorized by project type, travel time of a comparable trip (including a non-tolled vehicular trip), and serviced population. Projects that move more people through the corridor, faster

and more efficiently, in the peak directions during the peak period will be identified as having a higher likelihood of moderate or significant travel time reductions.

5.2.1.3 Congestion Mitigation – Transportation Connections (15%)

The objective of the connectivity factor is to assess how well a project is suited to create, complete, or link transportation network elements and/or modes. The measurement of this factor is based on the number of created or enhanced connections between modes and the promotion of transportation choice in daily travel.

Each project will be assessed for potential impacts on modal interaction and transportation choice in the corridor and assigned a score of ‘Higher,’ ‘Medium,’ ‘Lower,’ or ‘No Score.’

Higher – the project provides or enhances connections between two or more travel modes

Medium – the project meets at least one of the following conditions:

- It provides new modal connections
- It further promotes transportation choice
- It completes a significant existing gap in the transportation network

Lower – the project has minimal or no impact on connectivity

No Score – the project creates a barrier between modes or results in a loss of travel options

5.2.1.4 Congestion Mitigation – Accessibility (15%)

The objective of the accessibility factor is to evaluate the project’s ability to provide people with opportunities along the corridor. This measure is based on the connections created or enhanced between people and activity centers.

Each project is assigned a score of ‘Higher,’ ‘Medium,’ ‘Lower,’ or ‘No Score’ based on an assessment of the project’s improvement to transportation options and connect people with their destinations.

Higher – the project connects travelers to two or more activity centers

Medium – the project connects travelers to at least one activity center

Lower – the project addresses, improves or enhances ‘first/last mile’ travel between home/employment locations and transit or carpool/vanpool facilities

No Score – the project does not connect travelers to activity centers nor improve ‘first/last mile’ travel

Projects that support travel to one or more of the activity centers will be considered for the ‘Higher’ or ‘Medium’ evaluation scores. Activity centers are based on the following locations:

- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Regional Activity Centers (projected for 2045) – for both I-66 and I-395/95 corridors
- Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) Long Range Transportation Plan Activity Centers – for I-395/95 corridor only

5.2.1.5 Diversion Mitigation (10%)

The objective of the diversion mitigation factor is to assess how well a project is suited to mitigate the impacts of trips that are diverted from the tolled expressway onto parallel routes because of tolling or



HOV restrictions. This measure reflects jurisdictions' concerns that tolling policies may negatively impact parallel roadways and neighborhoods in the corridor.

Each project is assigned a score of 'Higher,' 'Medium,' 'Lower,' or 'No Score' based on the project type and an assessment of the potential for trip diversion mitigation.

Higher – the project provides, supports, or enhances transit service that attracts trips that are diverted from I-66 or I-395/95 due to tolling or HOV restrictions

Medium – the project provides, supports, or enhances carpool or vanpool services that attract trips that are diverted from I-66 or I-395/95 due to tolling or HOV restrictions

Lower – the project provides, supports, or enhances operational or geometric improvements along a roadway in the corridor that may be used by trips that are diverted from I-66 or I-395/95 due to tolling or HOV restrictions OR otherwise is another project type not specified in the 'Higher' or 'Medium' categories that can be demonstrated to mitigate diversion from I-66 or I-395/95 due to tolling or HOV restrictions

No Score – the project does not mitigate the impacts of diversion

Consideration will be given to locations where trip diversion is expected based on most-recently available traffic analyses at the time of the technical evaluation.

5.2.2 Annualized Cost Effectiveness

The objective of the annualized cost effectiveness criterion is to identify solutions to multimodal issues that can be achieved with a responsible application of available tolling revenue. This measure is based on a comparison of the technical merit criteria scores with the annualized Commuter Choice funding request. Annualized funding requests are calculated based on the useful life of capital assets and on the number of years of transit operating or other annual payments that are being requested.

For each project, the cost effectiveness score will be calculated as the sum of the technical merit criteria scores divided by annualized funding request and will be expressed as the technical merit score per million dollars of funding. Projects will be ranked according to their annualized cost effectiveness. The top third will be given a 'Higher' score, the middle third will be given a 'Medium' score, and the bottom third will be given a 'Lower' score.

The useful lifespans for common capital assets among Commuter Choice projects are shown in **Table 1**. The useful lifespans of Common Commuter Choice assets were determined using FTA and DRPT guidance, with simplified categories. The useful lives for determining projects' Annualized Cost Effectiveness scores are consistent with those that NVTC will apply for asset management purposes (see **Section 12.3**).

Table 1: Useful Life of Commuter Choice Assets

| Asset Type | Useful Life |
|---|-------------|
| Bikes | 5 years |
| Bus shelters / Capital Bike Share Stations | 15 years |
| Pavement (parking lot, roadway asphalt, sidewalk, trail) | 20 years |
| Rail Vehicles | 25 years |
| Real Estate | 100 years |
| Structures / Buildings | 40 years |
| Technology | 10 years |
| Transit Buses | 12 years |
| Vans | 4 years |
| Other Capital Costs (does not include soft costs such as PE, promotion, design) | 2 years |

Note: Constructions, buildings, and improvements occupying land have useful specific lives. While for FTA purposes, the land itself does not depreciate and does not have a useful life, for the purposes of the Commuter Choice program a useful life of 100 years should be used for all land.

Where **Table 1** does not provide guidance on a particular asset class, recipients should contact NVTC's Program Manager for assistance with identifying an appropriate useful life. NVTC may consider FTA guidance, Commonwealth guidance and/or industry standards in determining an appropriate useful life.

To help illustrate the annualizing of costs, consider a hypothetical project proposal for \$3.9 million in Commuter Choice funding that includes:

- A \$2.4 million bus purchase (useful life 12 years)
- \$200,000 for infrastructure upgrades at a park-and-ride lot (useful life 40 years)
- \$1.3 million for two years of transit operations

The annualized Commuter Choice funding request for this proposal is \$855,000, computed as follows:

$$\frac{\$2,400,000}{12} + \frac{\$200,000}{40} + \frac{\$1,300,000}{2} = \$855,000$$

The project's total Technical Merit score would be compared against the \$855,000 figure.

5.2.3 Applicant Preference

As part of the application, each applicant will be required to rank their application submissions in priority order. Application materials must include board or council certification of project ranking. The top-ranked project for each applicant will be given 10 points. Should a project that is ranked highest be determined ineligible or otherwise withdrawn by the applicant during the application period, the 10 points will be assigned to the next highest-ranking project for that applicant.

5.2.4 Interagency Collaboration

The objective of the interagency collaboration criterion is to reward projects that demonstrate collaboration across jurisdictions and agencies. An applicant would need to demonstrate that a



proposed project has been coordinated with other eligible applicants and/or affected agencies to earn the five points under this criterion, which may include a project that:

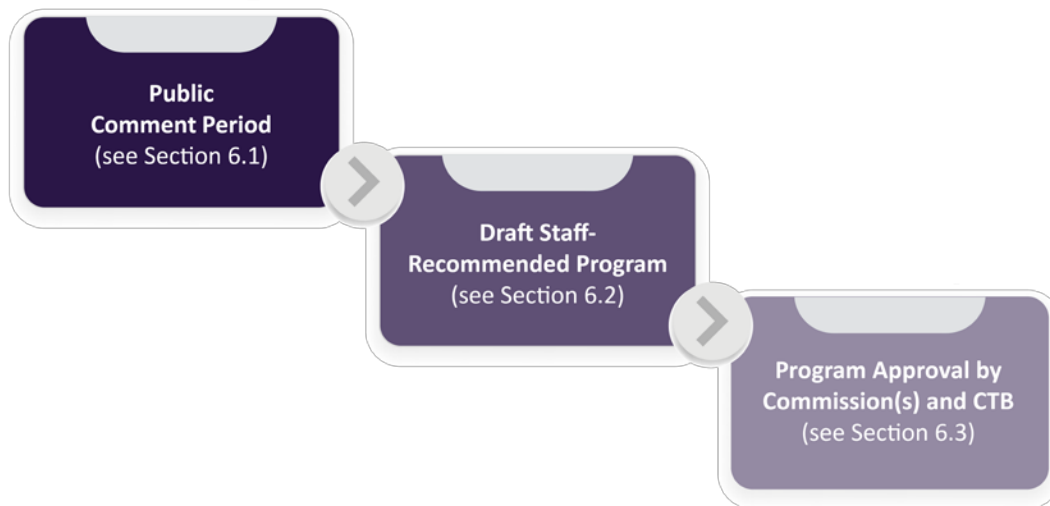
- Spans jurisdictional boundaries, with more than one jurisdiction contributing to the implementation;
- Is supported by neighboring jurisdictions, whether they are affected by the project or not; or
- Is supported by any other jurisdiction or agency that would be directly affected by the project.

As part of the application, each applicant will be required to identify via documentation the interagency collaboration that has occurred. Documentation may include letters of support, emails, memoranda of agreement and/or any other items that sufficiently demonstrate interagency collaboration at high levels within the organizations. Correspondence submitted as documentation must be from a director or higher-level official, such as a transportation or planning director, city or county manager, or other similar individual.

Chapter 6 Program Selection

Each fiscal year's program is selected from the pool of eligible project applications submitted to the Call for Projects. The project score, together with public input and the constraints of the available funding, inform the list of projects that is recommended by the Commission (NVTC for I-66 and both NVTC and PRTC for I-395/95) for approval by the CTB. **Figure 11** shows the key steps in the project selection process.

Figure 11: Key Steps in the Project Selection Process



6.1 Public Comment Period

The Commission(s) seeks public input on projects submitted for funding consideration as part of the Commuter Choice program. Since proposed projects are assumed to have resulted from local planning processes, with local Board or Council resolutions required to apply for Commuter Choice funding, the public input process is not intended to revisit the projects themselves. Instead, the Commuter Choice public comment period's goal is to help identify which projects merit funding from this competitive regional program.

Staff will ask the Commission(s) for authorization to open the public comment period once draft scores have been developed for all eligible project proposals and these scores have been shared with the Commission(s). During the public comment period, comments may be submitted through the program website, by telephone, or by mail. NVTC also will conduct a public meeting that will be scheduled to coincide with a Commission meeting at which interested parties may offer in-person testimony. Applicants are expected to staff in-person meetings to respond to questions from the public on project applications and about their entity's participation in the Commuter Choice program.

The project score, public input process and funding constraints are utilized by NVTC, together with the PAC/JCWG, to develop the program of projects to be approved by the Commission(s) for recommendation and approval by the CTB for inclusion in the SYIP.



6.2 Draft Staff-Recommended Program

NVTC staff will consider project scores, public input and funding availability to develop a draft program of projects. As each Call for Projects will cover two years of funding, the draft staff-recommended program will identify a proposed set of projects to receive each year's funding. NVTC staff anticipates that the draft program will be formed by ordering the proposals seeking funding in each year by score, with the highest first, and working downward in each fiscal year's list as far as the anticipated amount of funding in that fiscal year will permit. NVTC does not consider partial funding awards for projects that cannot be accommodated within available funding, as partial awards may adversely affect the projected benefits of the project.

NVTC staff will seek the endorsement of the draft program by the PAC for Commuter Choice on the I-66 corridor and the JCWG for Commuter Choice on the I-395/95 corridor before advancing any program to the full Commission(s) for consideration.

6.3 Program Approval by Commission(s) and CTB

The Commission(s) – NVTC for Commuter Choice on the I-66 corridor, and NVTC and PRTC jointly for Commuter Choice on the I-395/95 corridor – will consider the draft program as a starting point. The Commission(s) may prescribe changes to the program according to their desired approach for prioritizing projects.

The approved program will then be referred to the CTB for consideration and final approval, with the engagement of DRPT. As noted in **Chapter 4**, the Call for Projects schedule is based around the CTB's June action to adopt the SYIP for the following year. Since each Call for Projects will cover two fiscal years of funding, the CTB will act as follows:

- In the June immediately preceding the start of the first fiscal year covered by the call, the CTB will adopt the two years of projects into the SYIP. This action will allocate funds to projects receiving funding in the first fiscal year and program the projects that are to receive funding in the second year.
- In the June immediately preceding the start of the second fiscal year covered by the call, the CTB will take an administrative action to allocate funds to the projects already programmed for funding in the second fiscal year.