



TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

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STIP and TIP Amendment Procedures: A Review of State and MPO Practices

The purpose of this TRS is to serve as a synthesis of pertinent completed research to be used for further study and evaluation by MnDOT. This TRS does not represent the conclusions of either CTC & Associates or MnDOT.

Introduction

Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs (STIPs) are transportation planning documents used by state DOTs and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). TIPs and STIPs provide funding information for transportation projects that receive federal highway and transit funding, as well as state-funded projects.

STIPs and TIPs cover at least four years, but they must be periodically updated to reflect current needs. There are three types of updates: full updates, administrative modifications, and amendments.

Full updates happen at regular but infrequent intervals, generally annually or less often. Administrative modifications are minor changes—the correction of typographical errors, small cost or schedule changes, and the like. The process for making administrative modifications is generally relatively simple.

Amendments are significant adjustments to specific projects within the STIP or TIP. States and MPOs generally have specific procedures and schedules for making these amendments. MnDOT is investigating amendment procedures used in other states and MPOs as part of evaluating its own procedures. We contacted six states—Kansas, Colorado, Wisconsin, Georgia, Washington and Missouri—and one MPO in each of those states (namely, Kansas City, Denver, Milwaukee, Atlanta and Seattle) to learn their STIP and TIP amendment procedures.

Survey Questions

To gather information about STIP and TIP amendment procedures, we collected information from MPO and DOT websites and interviewed STIP and TIP administrators by phone or email. Our questions were:

Schedule

1. Are amendments created and submitted to FHWA and FTA at set intervals?
2. How long is the amendment process?

3. What is the public involvement process, including the length of comment period, for TIP and STIP amendments?
4. How often are the STIPs and TIPs newly updated?
5. Are the STIP and TIPs on the same fiscal year and update cycle?
6. Is the amendment process different during the time when a new STIP is being developed?

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7. Is each project processed as an individual amendment, or are they grouped together?
8. Do states duplicate entire TIPs in their STIP as Minnesota does? If this practice is followed only for certain projects, what criteria are used to determine this?
9. What format do amendments take, including the type of information included and the file format?

Coordination

10. What is the level and form of coordination among the MPO, DOT and FHWA in the amendment process? In particular, are there any requirements regarding meetings among these groups?
11. Are amendments audited or otherwise reviewed by organizations outside of the participating agencies?
12. How many committees or boards are involved in the approval process at the MPO?

Other

13. Is there specific documentation or other methods needed for demonstrating fiscal constraint in amendments?
14. How does the amendment process address air quality and analyze and determine air quality conformity?
15. What guidelines are available for subdividing large projects into smaller, more specific entries in the STIP or TIP?
16. What is the threshold for amending the TIP and STIP (as opposed to making administrative modifications)?

Summary of Results

We conducted interviews by phone or email with five states DOTs and four MPOs. All 11 organizations, including the two that were targeted for inclusion but declined to be interviewed, have websites that include at least some of the requested information, and we gathered information from these websites as well. Below is an overview of our findings about STIP and TIP amendment procedures in the states we contacted.

Schedule

- Amendment schedules vary; several states and MPOs process amendments as needed, but many have set deadlines ranging from monthly to quarterly.
- The length of the amendment process varies, but approximately 30 days is common.
- Most states update their STIPs annually. The MPOs surveyed update TIPs every two or four years.
- TIP updates are often, but not always, on the same annual schedule as STIP updates.
- Several agencies skip the amendment process during the time when a new STIP or TIP is being finalized.

Content

- Most agencies process multiple projects as a single amendment.
- Most states include regional TIPs in their STIPs by reference, rather than by including the full text of the TIP.

- The information included in amendments varies, but generally includes the project number, project location, cost and a description of the change. File formats for amendment submission also vary, including PDFs, Word documents, spreadsheets, or web forms.

Coordination

- Coordination among MPOs, state DOTs, and FHWA and FTA is most commonly done through informal phone calls and emails rather than formal meetings.
- Most MPOs have two or three boards or committees that approve amendments.
- None of the agencies surveyed reported any third-party auditing of amendments.

Other Findings

- Most, though not all, agencies generate reports or spreadsheets to demonstrate fiscal constraint.
- When needed, air quality analysis is generally handled at the MPO level.
- There are relatively few guidelines regarding whether large projects are subdivided in the STIP or TIP.
- Changes that require amendments, rather than administrative modifications, generally include cost changes, scope changes, addition or removal of projects, and controversial measures.

State DOT and MPO Procedures

This section summarizes by topic the results of our interviews with state DOTs and MPOs and the information we gathered from their websites. Appendix A, provided separately to MnDOT, contains detailed results for each DOT and MPO.

Schedule

1. Are amendments created and submitted to FHWA and FTA at set intervals?

There is some variation among states in this area. Two states process amendments as needed; one processes amendments every other month, with special amendments processed as needed; and two states process amendments monthly. The states with monthly amendments rarely have special amendments; one of the states noted that setting and publicizing a standing deadline for monthly amendments has greatly reduced the need for special amendments. The states with monthly amendments do not process amendments during the one or two months when the STIP is being updated.

There is similar variation among MPOs. None have a completely fixed schedule. One processes amendments quarterly with special amendments possible, but if an amendment is processed outside of the quarterly schedule the sponsor is expected to pay the cost of advertising the amendment for public comment, approximately \$5,000. A second processes amendments quarterly, but said that special amendments are possible and that the MPO is now actively trying to be more nimble in the amendment process. Two process amendments monthly, although one of these frequently has no amendments in a given month and in practice the amendments are processed as needed. The fifth processes amendments as needed, generally at least once per year.

2. How long is the amendment process?

Most of the responding states reported approximately month-long amendment processes, but one has a six- to seven-week amendment process. Three of the five have 14- or 15-day public comment periods; one has a seven-day comment period and one has a 30-day comment period. Time for federal approval varies from a few days to two weeks.

MPOs reported greater variability in the length of the amendment process, even within a single MPO, largely because different amendments trigger different public comment periods. While the process generally takes about one month, the time required for different types of amendments at different MPOs could be as short as two weeks or as long as three months.

3. What is the public involvement process, including the length of comment period, for TIP and STIP amendments?

As noted above, STIP amendments require public comment periods ranging from seven to 30 days. TIP amendment comment periods are more variable, even within a given MPO. One provides a 14-day comment period; another provides 14 days for comment or 30 days if the amendment also involves an amendment to the regional transportation plan. A third invites public comment at committee meetings, with agendas posted seven days in advance. The final MPO provides 10 days for public comment, or 30 days if an air quality conformity determination is necessary.

4. How often are the STIPs and TIPs newly updated?

Five of the six states investigated update their STIPs annually; four of these cover four years, while the fifth covers five years. One state updates its STIP every four years, and the STIP covers six years.

Two of the MPOs update their TIPs every two years, while the other two update them every four years.

5. Are the STIP and TIPs on the same fiscal year and update cycle?

There is some variety in approaches here. Most states reported that MPOs generally, but not universally, update TIPs on the same schedule as the state. One state reported that its MPOs' TIPs are updated every other year and on a different schedule than the STIP. One MPO spans two states that are on different STIP update schedules and naturally cannot match both; this MPO follows the federal fiscal year rather than either state's schedule.

6. Is the amendment process different during the time when a new STIP is being developed?

The two responding states with regularly scheduled monthly amendments both do not process regular amendments while the STIP is being updated. One of these states skips processing amendments for one month; the other skips two months. Three states do not adjust the amendment process when a new STIP is being developed; they noted that amendments pertain only to the currently approved STIP rather than the new one under development.

Among MPOs, one skips a quarterly amendment during the years when a TIP update is being completed. Another MPO reported that during the time when a new TIP is being created, two sets of amendments are processed so that the amendment is reflected in both the current TIP and the one being developed.

Content

7. Is each project processed as an individual amendment, or are they grouped together?

Except for one MPO, all of the responding states and MPOs consistently process multiple projects together as a single amendment.

8. Do states duplicate entire TIPs in their STIP as Minnesota does? If this practice is followed only for certain projects, what criteria are used to determine this?

Most states (four out of five) include TIPs by reference rather than duplicating the full text of the TIP. One state

lists MPO projects that use advance construction as an appendix to the STIP at FHWA's request and in order to demonstrate fiscal constraint. One state that includes TIPs by reference does include full project listings for projects in the state that are not covered by a TIP. The state that does include the full text of the TIP does not necessarily include full project listings for projects in rural areas outside of an MPO.

9. What format do amendments take, including the type of information included and the file format?

There are a number of details included in STIP and TIP amendments. While different states and MPOs include different information, some commonalities can be seen.

Most or all amendments include:

- **Project numbers:** Each STIP or TIP amendment that we reviewed includes some form of identification number. These may be a project number, or the project's STIP or TIP identification number. One TIP also included the federal ID number in the amendment.
- **Project location:** Each STIP amendment and some of the TIP amendments specify the county. Six of the eight amendments reviewed include details on the project location, either by naming or describing the route. Two amendments denote the length of the project.
- **Cost:** Each STIP or TIP amendment describes the project cost and cost changes. Many amendments, though not all, break these costs out by year, funding source and work phase. Most give specific costs, although one STIP provides only cost ranges.
- **Description of change:** Each amendment describes the change that necessitates the amendment, although there is no consistency in the format. Some have set categories for the amendment type (advancing or deferring projects, adding or deleting projects, increasing or decreasing the budget, changing scope, or air quality). Others permit narrative descriptions of the change.

The file format of amendments is similarly varied among the surveyed organizations. Two of the surveyed states process amendments through a web-based form used for both STIP and TIP amendments. Others use PDFs, Word documents, or spreadsheets for amendment submission.

Coordination

10. What is the level and form of coordination among the MPO, DOT and FHWA in the amendment process? In particular, are there any requirements regarding meetings among these groups?

For the most part, regular but informal contact via phone or email was preferred to formal meetings for addressing issues. None of the responding states said that there were standing meetings among MPOs, DOTs and FHWA during the amendment process. One state reported that the DOT central office and districts have assigned staff to serve as liaisons with MPOs and with FHWA/FTA to resolve any issues before entering the formal approval process. Another state reported that DOT planning partners often attend MPO meetings where TIP amendments are being discussed to resolve issues early. In general, issues are addressed at the state and local level, so there is more contact between states and MPOs than between states and FHWA/FTA.

One MPO representative reported attending monthly DOT status meetings and quarterly district meetings to provide updates, but these are general business meetings rather than meetings dedicated to the STIP or TIP. Another MPO representative said that while there are no regularly scheduled meetings, special meetings may be called to address particularly complicated projects.

11. Are amendments audited or otherwise reviewed by organizations outside of the participating agencies?

None of the states or MPOs reported any third-party review. One MPO did note that the Environmental Protection Agency would be involved if any air quality determinations were necessary, but said the MPO was in attainment and such determinations are not needed.

12. How many committees or boards are involved in the approval process at the MPO?

While each MPO has its own committee structure, each has two or three levels of committee approval, plus an additional committee in some instances to address air quality.

Other

13. Is there specific documentation or other methods needed for demonstrating fiscal constraint in amendments?

Each of the surveyed states has its own method for demonstrating fiscal constraint. Two produce a report of some sort to ensure fiscal constraint. Another uses a spreadsheet that tracks available funds. One state has no formal process, but the state's financial system will flag projects if the money for them is not available. The final state produces a cash flow worksheet that accompanies an amendment for public comment and federal approval, but for the most part delegates fiscal constraint to the MPOs.

Two of the MPOs reported updating the TIP's overall expenditures and revenue with each amendment. A third said that fiscal constraint is included in the regional transportation plan documentation and that nothing additional is needed for TIP amendments.

14. How does the amendment process address air quality and analyze and determine air quality conformity?

For the most part, the states surveyed reported that air quality is addressed at the MPO level. One state noted that all areas of the state are currently in attainment for ozone and other transportation-based pollutants, so the amendment process does not currently need to address air quality.

The MPOs surveyed have processes in place to address air quality, though several noted that they rarely use them. One said that the city is not designated as a nonattainment area, but if it were a committee would address air quality in amendments. Another has such a committee. A third noted that a new conformity finding would be required for amendments that change the number of lanes on a roadway, add or delete road segments, or add or delete rapid transit segments or stations, but that no such finding had been required in at least seven years.

15. What guidelines are available for subdividing large projects into smaller, more specific entries in the STIP or TIP?

Four of the five states surveyed reported that there are minimal guidelines, although one of those states tells local jurisdictions that anything under a single federal aid number should be part of the same project while separate federal aid numbers should be separate projects. The fourth state said its projects generally do not get subdivided; the state specifies sections of projects for each component, so splitting into separate projects is not required.

Two MPOs reported minimal guidelines. A third said that dividing projects is generally done in the regional transportation plan update, rather than the TIP amendment process.

16. What is the threshold for amending the TIP and STIP (as opposed to making administrative modifications)?

Administrative modifications are generally minor changes with a less involved process than TIP or STIP amendments. The distinction between amendment and modification varies by organization, but there are some elements that commonly make up this threshold:

- **Cost changes:** Each state and MPO noted that significant cost changes require amendments, although the definition of “significant” varies. Two states set the threshold at \$2 million or 20 percent of the project phase costs (in one state, only cost increases trigger the amendment requirement, while the other state requires an amendment for both increases and decreases). One state and one MPO have a threshold of \$5 million or 25 percent of total costs; the state only requires amendments for cost increases. One state sets the threshold at \$3 million or 30 percent of the total cost, and one MPO sets the threshold at \$4 million with no percentage provision. The other two MPOs and one state have no defined thresholds; in interviews, one MPO said that a 10 percent change in a small project would require an amendment, and that a \$100,000 change on a \$5 million project would as well.
- **Scope changes:** Most of the agencies include a provision that major scope changes require an amendment. While the term is not always defined, a major scope change often includes a change to the termini of a project, a change to the number of through traffic lanes, or removal of multimodal elements.
- **Adding or removing projects or phases:** Several agencies specify that adding or removing a project or a project phase necessitates an amendment.
- **Controversial measures:** Several agencies noted that they use the flexibility of the amendment threshold to ensure that any change likely to be controversial goes through the amendment procedure to ensure public review. Many also include provisions that any change that requires an air quality analysis, demonstration of fiscal constraint, or public review is elevated to an amendment.

Contacts and Online Resources

Detailed responses from each state DOT and MPO are provided separately in Appendix A. Contact information and websites for each jurisdiction are listed below.

State DOTs

Colorado DOT

Contact: Jamie Collins, STIP Manager, Office of Financial Management & Budget, (303) 757-9092, jamie.collins@state.co.us.

STIP home page: <http://www.coloradodot.info/business/budget/statewide-transportation-improvement-program-stip-reports-information>

Current STIP: <http://www.coloradodot.info/business/budget/documents/00-FY12-FY17%20STIP%20-%20as%20Adopted%20051911.pdf>

Sample STIP amendment: <http://www.coloradodot.info/business/budget/documents/march-policy-amendment-report-fy13>

Georgia DOT

Contacts: Krystal Harris, Office of Planning, (404) 631-1810, kharris@dot.ga.gov.

Dave Cox, West Georgia Branch Chief, (404) 631-1807, dcox@dot.ga.gov.

STIP home page: <http://www.dot.ga.gov/projects/programs/transportation/Pages/stip.aspx>

Current STIP: <http://www.dot.ga.gov/Projects/programs/transportation/Documents/STIP/2013-2016/2013-2016-FinalSTIP.pdf>

Sample STIP amendment: <http://www.dot.ga.gov/Projects/programs/transportation/Documents/STIP/2013-2016/Amendment8.pdf>

Kansas DOT

Contact: Chuck Protasio, (785) 296-0284, chuck@ksdot.org.

STIP home page: <http://www.ksdot.org/burProgProjMgmt/STIP/stip1116/StipHome1116.asp>

Current STIP: <http://www.ksdot.org/burProgProjMgmt/STIP/stip1116/Entire%20Document.pdf> (88MB file)

Sample STIP amendment:

<http://www.ksdot.org/bureaus/burProgProjMgmt/STIP/stip1116/JulyAmendmentAmendment8approved07-10-2013.pdf>

Missouri DOT

Contact: Machel Watkins, Transportation Planning Director, (573) 526-1374

STIP home page and current STIP: http://www.modot.org/plansandprojects/construction_program/STIP2014-2018/

Sample STIP amendment: http://www.modot.org/plansandprojects/construction_program/STIP2014-2018/ApprovedAmendmentsAndModifications2014.htm

Washington State DOT

Contact: Nancy Huntley, Project Prioritization Engineer, (360) 705-7378, HuntleN@wsdot.wa.gov.

STIP home page: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/localprograms/programmgmt/stip.htm>

Current STIP: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/LocalPrograms/ProgramMgmt/STIPDoc.htm>

Sample STIP amendment: See <http://webpub1.wsdot.wa.gov/LocalPrograms/Projects/Reports/ProjectSearch.aspx>, then click “List Projects for an Amendment” and select an amendment.

Wisconsin DOT

Contact: Diane Paoni, (608) 266-1402, Diane.Paoni@dot.wi.gov.

STIP home page: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/stip.htm>

Current STIP: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/docs/stip.pdf>

Sample STIP amendment: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/docs/stip-amendment-0613.pdf>

MPOs

Atlanta Regional Commission

Contact: Jean Hee Barrett, (404) 463-3282, jbarrett@atlantaregional.com.

TIP home page: <http://www.atlantaregional.com/transportation/transportation-improvement-program>

Current TIP:

http://www.atlantaregional.com/File%20Library/Transportation/Transportation%20Plans/tp_tiplist_061213.pdf

TIP Amendment FAQs:

http://www.atlantaregional.com/File%20Library/Transportation/Transportation%20Plans/tp_tipadminmodFAQsheet.pdf

Sample TIP amendment: <http://www.atlantaregional.com/transportation/transportation-improvement-program/fy-2013-2017-tip-amendment-3>

Denver Regional Council of Governments

Contact: Todd Cottrell, Senior Transportation Planner, (303) 480-6737, tcottrell@drcog.org.

TIP home page: <http://drcog.org/index.cfm?page=TransportationImprovementProgram%28TIP%29>

Current TIP: <http://drcog.org/documents/2012-2017%20TIP%20-%20AdoptedMarch11.pdf>

TIP Amendment Procedures: <http://drcog.org/documents/12-17%20TIP%20Amendment%20Process.pdf>

Sample TIP amendment: <http://drcog.org/documents/June%202013%20Policy%20Amendments%20-%20Memo%20and%20Table.pdf>

Mid-America Regional Council (Kansas City)

Contact: Ron Achelpohl, Assistant Director of Transportation, (816) 474-4240, rona@marc.org.

TIP home page: <http://www.marc.org/transportation/tip.htm>

Current TIP: <http://www.marc.org/transportation/tip/2012-2016/TIP2012-2016.pdf>

TIP Amendment Procedures: <http://www.marc.org/transportation/tip/modifications.htm>

Sample TIP amendment: <http://www.marc.org/transportation/tip/amendments/13Q3amend.pdf>

Puget Sound Regional Council (Seattle)

Contact: Chris Peak, (206) 464-7536, cpeak@psrc.org.

TIP home page: <http://www.psrc.org/transportation/tip>

Current TIP: http://www.psrc.org/assets/8610/A-REV_Detailed_Project_Listings.pdf

Sample TIP amendment: <http://www.psrc.org/assets/9911/1307.pdf>

Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (Milwaukee)

Contact: Ryan Hoel, Principal Engineer, (262) 547-6721, rhoel@sewrpc.org.

TIP home page: <http://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPC/Transportation/Regional-Transportation-Improvement.htm>

Current TIP: http://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPCFiles/Publications/TIP/TIP_2013-2016.pdf

Sample TIP amendment: <http://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPCFiles/Transportation/Files/tip/tip-resolution-2013-09.pdf>