

Chapter VII: STIP Approval and Adoption Process

This section describes the process for preparing and reviewing the Draft STIP, the public review process, and final approval by the federal government. Figure II-1 in [Chapter II – Background](#) shows the adoption process.

A. The Draft STIP

After the ODOT regions have submitted their project recommendations, ODOT prepares a draft STIP document for public review. The draft document lists all identified projects and programs, by county, in each ODOT Region and all state-wide program buckets, projects of state-wide significance and earmarks. Project information is entered into the state's Project Control System (PCS) data base using protocols and procedures established for the STIP. These administrative procedures are documented in *The STIP Development Manual*, which is an internal ODOT document that documents procedures for ODOT staff to follow for the current STIP cycle. In addition to the administrative procedures to compile the draft document, the following process steps are associated with the draft STIP.

1. DRAFT STIP FISCAL ANALYSIS

All state-sponsored project recommendations from program managers and highway regions are reviewed by the Highway Finance Office (HFO). The review is intended to ensure two things.

- It ensures that the recommended draft STIP projects meet program eligibility criteria established by the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) or legal limitations established by state or federal laws and rules.
- It ensures that the recommended projects fit within the target program allocations and where appropriate, to make adjustments to the target allocations.

When inconsistencies are found with either of these review objectives, HFO works with the appropriate program manager and region office to resolve the issue. Budget authority problems may be remedied by altering the timing for a particular project (e.g. delaying it to a later year in the STIP cycle). Program eligibility problems may be remedied by “swapping” project funding between two similar programs. This process involves a highly technical review that primarily takes place in ODOT but may involve a metropolitan planning organization (MPO), transit district, or local government if the decision affects that jurisdiction.

2. PRELIMINARY AIR QUALITY REVIEW

Air quality conformity is a highly technical process that may involve more than one state agency. In geographic areas that are subject to air quality review, the transportation

plans and related improvement program is one part of the regulatory framework. Part of the conformity review involves modeling air quality as if the proposed STIP projects were already part of the transportation system.

Federal law allows a compliance finding when a transportation plan and related system investment has a minor effect on the overall air quality improvement program. Projects that result in a worsening of air quality conditions have difficulty securing STIP approval.

Sophisticated air quality models are used to evaluate the effects of a transportation system investment. The draft STIP is evaluated by state and federal regulators to determine if there are any parts of the proposed program that may pose air quality issues during the formal conformity review.

3. PUBLIC REVIEW HEARINGS

After the draft STIP document is published, it is presented for review and comment in public hearings across the state. This review process is managed by ODOT's Region Planning Managers. In most regions, a public meeting is held in each Area Commission on Transportation (ACT) area. Typically these meetings involve a formal ODOT staff presentation made to the ACT followed by public hearing at which testimony is taken. Each region conducts this process differently.

Regions 1 and 3 coordinate a portion of their draft STIP review with the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) public review process. Region 5 uses telecommunications technology to link remote communities and to enable citizen interaction at multiple locations at the same time. Each region decides how to display information at the hearings. Some regions present maps that show the locations of major construction and major preservation projects. Other projects are listed in a table by program and mile-post. Other regions display the location of every STIP project in each area. The scale of the region's STIP program dictates how the information is presented.

Comments are collected from the hearings and are summarized for the ACTs and the OTC in staff reports. Public recommendations on state-funded projects are considered in view of project recommendations from staff and ACTs. Public comments may result in a change to the STIP.

B. STIP Adoption and Federal Approval

After the internal and public review of the draft STIP is completed, HFO works with Program Managers, and Region Planning Managers, STIP Coordinators, and Technical Service Center staff to develop a final program. ODOT divisions hold internal meetings to review adjustments to the programs they manage.

The Oregon Freight Advisory Committee (FAC), ACT members, MPOs, transit providers, federal and tribal entities, and interested individuals also have an opportunity

to comment on the final document. Comments are consolidated by staff and presented to the OTC with a recommendation for adoption of the final STIP. The OTC decides whether to adopt the document as presented by staff or to modify it based on public testimony.

After adoption by the OTC, the final STIP is forwarded to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) their review. These agencies must approve any Surface Transportation Program (STP) transfers and they also coordinate the formal air quality conformity review. Their approval is needed to commit federal funding for the projects that are programmed into the STIP.

The final STIP also is sent to any MPOs, tribal entities, federal agencies and stakeholders that request the document and they may forward comments to the federal review agencies. Federal approval may be granted for the entire document or conditions may be imposed on select projects that are found to not fully comply with federal laws and rules.

Once federal approval is granted, the STIP becomes the formal work program for ODOT and local governments for transportation projects and programs for the next four years.