

About the Evaluation Plan

The Evaluation Plan defines the step-by-step process for which the team takes to get from the initial long list of connections to the Implementation Plan. Each step along the way uses a predefined set of criteria to evaluate or measure the connections. The end result of the final step (Step Three) will be an Implementation Plan prioritizing the top three transit projects and the steps to implement them.

This companion document to the Evaluation Plan is designed to:

- Be straightforward and transparent
- Answer the following questions:
 - Which projects have the greatest potential to be funded (compete for federal grants) and implemented?
 - Which projects are the most forward thinking and make the best use of today's technology?
 - Which projects best serve our region today while supporting tomorrow's growth?

Preparing for Step One

The effort started with identifying connections from the more than 80 premium transit projects identified in county and regional Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs). The limits (or end points) shown were defined by their descriptions from the LRTPs; however, no mode or technology (bus, rail, etc.) was identified for the connections. Where connections were defined in more than one plan, but separated by County lines, these were combined into one consistent connection.

Step One: Where are the top performing connections?

Using the premium transit connections identified during past planning efforts, which best serve key regional mobility needs?

Once the long list of connections was identified, Step One evaluation criteria was applied to identify the top 5 connections to take forward into Step Two. Step One evaluated the following:

- **Regional Connections:** Connection's ability to serve key regional activity centers and regional travel needs
 - Most Regional Activity Centers served
 - Greatest number of regional trips served to these activity centers
- **Economic Development:** Connection's ability to provide access to jobs and redevelopment areas
 - Highest density of jobs and residents within ½ mile of the connection
 - Most miles within areas of transit supportive policies and/or designated as Community Redevelopment Areas
- **Community and Environment:** Connection's ability to connect to community amenities or resources
 - Least miles of the connection within storm surge areas or flood zones
 - Highest number of community amenities served (cultural, educational, institutional, recreational)
 - Most frequently studied over the past 30 years (building upon decades of best practices and available data to avoid starting from scratch)

The top five performing connections within each criterion received a point. The five connections scoring the highest across all criteria (cumulative total points) advanced to the next step.

Moving from Step One to Step Two: Sensitivity Testing

Which technologies or transit modes best serve the top 5 connections?

Step One resulted in the top five connections with no mode or technology defined. A deeper dive is underway to better understand the characteristics of each connection. Characteristics include the types of jobs served, amount and density of population served, average trip length, and what types of trips are being made. Two basic overarching transit types will be considered for each connection: rubber tire and steel wheel. Within the two

transit types, a host of transit modes could be considered. For example, rubber tire may include express bus or bus rapid transit; steel wheel may include light rail or commuter rail, among others.

Sensitivity testing is being conducted to apply the optimal operating scenario to each connection to better understand what the most optimistic ridership could be on any type of transit given limited restrictions on elements such as frequency, station spacing, fares, parking availability at stations, or travel speed. The result will make it possible to understand what type (rubber tire or steel wheel) and specific mode could be supported on the connection given the optimal conditions. Conducting the sensitivity test includes analysis of the following:

- Potential ridership demand along the connection
- Passenger trip lengths
- Travel times
- Right-of-way needs

Up to three transit modes will be identified for each of the five connections based on that mode's ability to effectively serve the needs of the connection. Up to fifteen projects will be advanced to Step Two for evaluation.

Step Two: What are the best projects?

Which are the 3 best connections?

Once the best transit modes are matched with the connections, Step Two will evaluate the following:

- **Feasibility, Community, and Environment:** Projects with the least number of high cost elements and with the fewest significant impacts to the community or natural resources
- **Mobility:** Projects that have the best mobility improvements using the FTA Mobility Improvements Criteria rating
 - Number of transit trips using the project
 - Number of trips by transit dependent people using the project
- **Cost Effectiveness:** Projects that have the greatest cost effectiveness using the FTA Cost Effectiveness Criteria rating or meet project justification warrants
 - Annualized capital costs (current year) of the project
 - Annual operating and maintenance (O&M) costs of the project
- **Land Use:** Projects that rank highest using the FTA Land Use Criteria rating
 - Station area population densities
 - Employment served by the project
 - Legally binding affordability restricted housing within ½ mile of station areas (as compared to the county totals through which the project travels)
- **Return on Investment:** Projects' cost compared to the monetized benefits of the project or the net value return on investment

The top three performing projects within each criterion will receive a point. The three highest scoring projects across all criteria (cumulative total points), will advance to the next step.

Moving from Step Two to Step Three: Value Engineering

How can the projects be more competitive?

Once the top projects are identified, the team will identify the alignments and consider changes that may positively affect cost, delivery, and performance. Value engineering the projects may adjust:

- Design of project infrastructure (guideway, facilities, site work, systems, right of way, and vehicles)
- Design, quantity, and location of stations

Refinements to the top three projects as a result of value engineering will advance to the next step.

Step Three: How and when will the projects be built?

Which project is the most competitive for funding today?

The top 3 projects resulting from the Value Engineering effort will be ordered for implementation based on their ability to compete for federal funds and available and committed local funding. Step Three will evaluate the following:

- **Best Overall FTA Project Rating:** Best anticipated overall FTA Project Justification Rating for mobility improvements, environmental benefits, congestion relief, cost-effectiveness, economic development, and land use (project justification based on available data)
- **Available local financial commitment (non-federal share):** Share of project costs and effort needed to secure local commitment, including recommendations based on a wide range of funding options/mechanisms

The top three projects will be ordered in priority for implementation based on the results of Step Three.

Preparing the Final Implementation Plan

The top three projects in implementation order is the basis for the Implementation Plan. This implementation plan will lay out the actions needed to advance each project and will include anticipated target dates (in years) for each action. This draft Implementation Plan will then be brought out to the public and stakeholders to obtain regional consensus. Based on the responses received, the Implementation Plan may be refined and finalized.