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# 1. Introduction

For major improvements proposed on the State Highway System (SHS), a Project Initiation Document (PID) is required to be developed and approved by the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) before it can be programmed and proceeded to the next phase of project development, the Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA&ED) phase. The PID documents the purpose and need of the project, the proposed improvements to address transportation problems, and a reliable cost and schedule to develop and construct the project. Development of PIDs for projects that is not expected to be funded by the State Highway Operation and Project Program (SHOPP) will undergo a project nomination process, starting January of each year.

The State-Sponsored Non-SHOPP PID Project Nomination Guidance (Guidance) outlines the process and methodology for nominating, prioritizing, and selecting projects for development of State-Sponsored PIDs using PID resources. This Guidance presents a framework to assist Districts in prioritizing and nominating projects that will be most competitive in the PID nomination process. Due to limited PID resources, HQ Division of Transportation Planning (DOTP) strongly encourages all districts to nominate transformative, innovative, and multi-modal projects that align with statewide goals and priorities and develop a conceptual funding strategy for future phases of the project.

To provide transparency in the nomination process, this Guidance defines specific criteria used by DOTP and the project review committee to prioritize nominated projects for State-Sponsored PID resources. The project nomination process will result in a list of prioritized projects that will be allocated with PID resources for PID development in the upcoming fiscal year (FY). The PID project list will also provide a platform for future strategic investment decisions as competitive funding opportunities arise, such as new federal competitive programs established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, also referred to as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (November 2021).

## 1.1 Purpose and Need

The purpose of this Guidance is to provide consistency and transparency in the project nomination methodology and process for State-Sponsored Non-SHOPP PID development. There is a need to optimize limited PID resources and strategically invest in projects that will advance State's goals and will eventually compete for various Federal and State discretionary grants.

## 1.2 Objective

The objective is to guide investment of annual PID resources towards projects that:

- Align with the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI), the California Transportation Plan (CTP) 2050, and Caltrans Strategic Management Plan (SMP)
- Address the priorities of State Agency partners, the Department and Districts, and regional and local transportation agencies and stakeholders
- Advance transformative, innovative, and multi-modal projects
- Meet eligibility requirements of potential Federal and State competitive programs

## 2. Background

In recent years, there has been a heightened commitment to strategically invest in projects that are consistent with State's goals and priorities, particularly the CAPTI framework. As a result, the nomination process was conceived as a mechanism to maximize State's PID resources and investments by advancing projects that meet a set of criteria, which align with the State's guiding documents (CAPTI, CTP 2020, SMP). This process helps ensure that only priority and competitive projects with a greater prospect of success move forward into project development and compete for State and Federal discretionary funds.

The Caltrans' PID workload consists of both SHOPP and Non-SHOPP projects. Non-SHOPP PIDs are either developed as State-Sponsored or through a reimbursement by the local agencies or private entities. This Guidance focuses on State-Sponsored Non-SHOPP PID, which is funded by the State Highway Account. The process for Non-SHOPP PIDs developed through a reimbursement by the local agencies or private entities is outside the scope of this Guidance.

### 2.1 State-Sponsored Non-SHOPP PIDs

Non-SHOPP PIDs can be developed for a variety of projects to address various transportation needs, such as operational improvements, transportation management systems, and highway facility additions and enhancements. While Non-SHOPP PIDs may be developed for projects that contain SHOPP-eligible elements, the anticipated funding sources for future project development and construction are expected to come from non-SHOPP programs, which include but not limited to, the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), SB 1 Solutions for Congested Corridors Program (SCCP) and Trade Corridor Enhancement Program (TCEP), as well as Federal discretionary grants.

While the majority of State-Sponsored PIDs are developed for projects sponsored by Caltrans, local-sponsored projects may also qualify for State-Sponsored PID resources if they are within County populations of less than 40,000, as identified in California Streets and Highways Code Section 2104 and Highway Users Tax Account. If the County population is greater than 40,000, the local agency must reimburse Caltrans for the cost to develop the PID or oversight services of the PID.

Caltrans recognizes that projects in rural counties of less than 40,000 in population have limited resources and unique transportation attributes compared to urban areas. For these reasons, Caltrans may consider prioritizing a project in a rural county for allocation of State-Sponsored PID resources if the project meets the general conditions below:

- Does not contradict any of the 10 CAPTI Guiding Principles; and,
- There is financial commitment from partner agency

Priority consideration for rural projects may be impacted by other factors, such as the amount of State-sponsored PID resources available and the number of nominations received each year.

### 3. Project Nomination Process

The State-Sponsored Non-SHOPP PID nomination process begins with DOTP Call for Nominations in January of each year. Districts should prioritize projects that best meet the scoring criteria and develop a preliminary funding strategy to increase the project's competitiveness. The funding strategy should include funds committed by partner agencies or private entities and any competitive programs the project may be eligible. State-Sponsored PID resources for Advance Mitigation projects and previously approved carryover PIDs are allocated off the top and do not go through the nomination process.

Figure 1 outlines the general process in which project nominations are evaluated, scored, and selected for State-Sponsored PID development.

**Figure 1**  
**General Nomination Process**



The following steps further detail the project evaluation and selection process.

1. DOTP Office of Strategic Investment Planning (OSIP) and the Project Review Committee (Committee), comprising of subject matter experts (SMEs), review all nominations received.
2. Projects are evaluated based on the information provided in the Nomination Intake Form and are scored against a set of criteria described in Section 4. The Committee's scores are reviewed and discussed to determine the final project scores.
3. Projects are prioritized according to the project total score. Additionally, DOTP will also consider how PID resources will be equitably allocated across all districts.
4. OSIP develops a prioritized List of Recommended Projects for DOTP Executive Management review and final approval.
5. DOTP notifies districts of the project selection decision.
6. OSIP coordinates with DOTP Office of Project Planning (OPP) to include the selected projects in the upcoming PID Delivery Plan.
7. OPP allocates and approves PID resources and informs districts of the next steps.

### 3.1 Project Nomination Schedule

In January of each year, DOTP will announce the Call for Nomination of State-Sponsored Non-SHOPP PIDs. Figure 2 illustrates the annual schedule for the nomination through selection process.

**Figure 2**  
**General Project Nomination Timeline**



### 3.2 District Nominations

Prior to nominating projects, Districts should collaborate with partner agencies to identify projects for nomination and ensure the projects are identified in one or more of the following documents:

- District Transportation Concept Report or Corridor Plan
- Regional Transportation Plan or equivalent document, including amendments
- Multimodal Operations Non-SHOPP Transportation Equity Report (MONSTER) List

Regional planning documents that identify “need” rather than projects are acceptable. While it is not a requirement for projects to be identified in all the above documents, projects that are identified in these documents help to justify the need for PID development.

If District intends to nominate multiple projects, the District must prioritize the projects and include the priority level in the Nomination Intake Form. Another critical element to consider when nominating projects is assessing the funding viability of the project’s future development beyond the PID phase. Districts should evaluate the project’s eligibility for various State and Federal competitive programs, including but not limited to, Active Transportation Program, STIP, SB 1 Local Partnerships Program, SB 1 SCCP, SB 1 TCEP, Transit & Intercity Rail Capital Program, Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA), and Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE). In addition, Districts are also strongly encouraged to evaluate project eligibility for the new federal competitive programs established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill.

To submit nominations, District must prioritize all projects and complete the State-Sponsored Non-SHOPP PID Nomination Intake Form for each project, available on the [OSIP website](#). All required documents listed on the Intake Form must be submitted to DOTP OSIP by the due date indicated in the Call for Nomination announcement.

In determining whether to nominate carryover PIDs, District should consider the following three general guidelines:

- **For a project where HQ previously agreed and allocated PID resources over two fiscal years**, the District does not need to resubmit the nomination for the 2<sup>nd</sup> FY.
- **When a project does not achieve Milestone M006 (60% Draft PID) by January 31**, the district should consult with DOTP OPP on a reasonable strategy to complete the PID, which may include renominating the project for additional PID resources to complete the PID.
- **If there is a risk of not completing the PID within the FY commitment per the PID Delivery Plans**, Districts should communicate the risk with DOTP OPP as early as possible. The discussion should include the reasons for delay, strategies to mitigate risks, and a clear action plan to deliver the PID. Due to limited PID resources, any unplanned carryover PIDs will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis through DOTP management review and approval. Renomination of the project may be required and may compete with other nominations statewide.

## 4. Project Evaluation & Scoring

The scoring criteria is based on the 10 CAPTI Guiding Principles and evaluate the extent to which the project is expected to meet each criterion.

### 4.1 Project Scoring Criteria

The project scoring criteria in Appendix A are based on the following 10 CAPTI Guiding Principles:

1. Build toward an integrated statewide rail and transit network
2. Invest in networks of safe and accessible bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure
3. Invest in light, medium, and heavy-duty zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) infrastructure
4. Develop a ZEV freight transportation system
5. Strengthen our commitment to social and racial equity by reducing public health and economic harms and maximizing community benefits
6. Make safety improvements to reduce fatalities and severe injuries of all users towards zero
7. Assess physical climate risk
8. Promote projects that do not significantly increase passenger vehicle travel
9. Promote compact infill development while protecting residents and businesses from displacement
10. Protect natural and working lands

To increase competitiveness, projects should also include the following Equity Considerations:

- A. Address Environmental Justice
  - Consider environmental justice in the planning stage
  - Include specific design elements to address climate change impacts to environmental justice communities
- B. Eliminate Barriers to Opportunity
  - Proactively address racial equity and barriers to opportunity, including automobile dependence as a form of barrier
  - Redress prior inequities and barriers to opportunity
- C. Engage the Community
  - Eliminate participation barriers and engage disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and/or communities of color in transportation decision making
  - Implement strategies to produce meaningful engagement of the community, including members of environmental justice communities

## 5. Other Considerations

In addition to the scoring criteria, DOTP will also consider the following factors when evaluating, prioritizing, and selecting projects for State-Sponsored PIDs:

- Fix-It-First Approach
- Priority Locations – small towns/rural main streets, low-income & disadvantaged communities, and communities segregated by transportation decisions, locations that are vulnerable to climate change, etc.
- Innovative and Transformative Solutions
- Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement
- Project Funding and Deliverability
- Equitable allocation of PID resources

Furthermore, during the evaluation & selection process, an assessment of unprogrammed PIDs may be conducted to determine alignment with CAPTI objectives and programming viability. If unprogrammed PIDs are determined to meet CAPTI objectives, these projects may be considered for Supplemental PID development ahead of newly nominated projects to effectively utilize State-Sponsored PID resources.



## District Score Board

As part of the Nomination Intake Form, the District must self-assess their responses to each scoring criteria question. This self-evaluation allows the Districts to thoughtfully examine their responses to each criterion and if additional considerations should be made to increase competitiveness. Table 1 defines how Districts should score their responses to each criterion.

**Table 1**  
**District Score Board**

<b>Points</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Criteria Description</b>
4-5	High	Responses are clear and concise and considerably advance the criteria
2-3	Medium	Responses address most aspects of the criteria and moderately advance the criteria
1	Low	Responses are not clearly stated and slightly advance the criteria
0	Does not Meet	The project does not advance or meet the criteria

## HQ Scoring Rubric

The Project Review Committee will review the District's response to each scoring criteria question and evaluate the extent to which the project meets each criterion based on the Scoring Rubric (Appendix B). Projects are prioritized based on their scores, and a Prioritized List of Recommended Projects are submitted for Executive Management for review and approval.