

Definition of Regionally Significant Project

1. Background

Recently, the Michigan Department of Transportation made it a priority to obtain more clarity regarding the decision-making process surrounding the designation of a project as “Regionally Significant”. According to the Federal MPO regulations, this has two primary implications:

- a) Must be included in the TIP
- b) Cannot be included in a GPA

Furthermore, the term “regionally significant” is not universally or expressly defined, but rather left up to the MPO to determine.

MDOT has asked each MPO to provide a preliminary definition/threshold of a project that is regionally significant to their office by July 9th, 2018. Additionally, they have asked their Statewide planning staff and the Region planners to assist MPO’s in creating this definition by that deadline.

2. Proposed Definition and Criteria for a Regional Significant Project

In evaluating the feasibility of a straightforward definition, MATS staff relied heavily on both the existing criteria for a TIP amendment as found in the MATS Bylaws, as well as newly released Federal guidance from the FHWA and FTA regarding TIP amendments and administrative modifications. These two sets of criteria are essentially in agreement regarding the differentiation on an action-specific basis between an amendment and an administrative modification, thus greatly simplifying project evaluation going forward. In addition, we reviewed the Federal rules regarding TIP development, noting that facilitating public involvement is a key motivating factor regarding regional significance.

This resulted in MATS staff leaning towards a relatively simple set of criteria for the proposed definition.

*To be **regionally significant** a project needs to meet all of the following criteria:*

- a) Be greater or equal to one-half mile in length*
- b) Be greater or equal to \$750,000 in total phase cost*
- c) Be a reconstruction or new facility (includes adding/removing a turn or travel lane).*

The rationale for this policy is predominantly based on the resulting impact to the MPO area, either during construction or as a result of the project having been constructed. Capital Preventative Maintenance projects are not intended to be categorized as regionally significant. Furthermore, these criteria are subject, from time to time, to review and approval by the MATS Policy Committee.

The foregoing was approved at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Midland Area Transportation Study Policy Committee on July 10th, 2018.