

Massachusetts Department of Transportation Highway Division Standard Operating Procedures		S.O.P. No.: HED-08-02-1-000 Page 1 of 12	
Subject: Project Initiation Process for Highway Division Projects			Distribution:
Effective: 02/01/22	Issued: 02/01/22	Supersedes all pages of: HED-08-02-1-000 dated 12/11/20	Authorized: Jonathan L. Gulliver (Signature on original)

Purpose and Applicability

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) summarizes the activities associated with initiating a project at the MassDOT Highway Division, from definition of project need through approval by the Project Review Committee (PRC). This SOP is designed to be consistent with the first three steps of the project development process as described in Chapter 2 of the *Project Development and Design Guide* (PDDG) (Sections 2.1, 2.2. and 2.3, pages 2-5 through 2-33):

Step 1: Problem/Need/Opportunity Identification

Step 2: Planning

Step 3: Project Initiation

This SOP applies to all projects, that is, activities that may result in the initial construction, maintenance, preservation, rehabilitation, or reconstruction of infrastructure or other facilities. It also applies to vertical construction projects. It is not intended to apply to activities such as maintenance equipment purchases or other procurements.

Definitions and Resources

MaPIT: All projects must be initiated through the Massachusetts Project Intake Tool (MaPIT), a web-based application designed to help both state and municipal proponents map, create, and initiate transportation projects, while screening against all relevant in-house GIS resources. The website is accessible at this address: <https://massdothpi.esriemcs.com/mapit/>

A username and password are required to use the website. Log-in credentials are provided to designated staff at MassDOT or other state agencies, official staff representing each city or town, and consulting firm personnel working on behalf of a city or town. Eligible staff includes those in charge of creating new projects within MassDOT or within municipalities. Training sessions are held periodically by the MassDOT Highway Division and training videos should be made available on mass.gov at the following address: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massdot-highway-initiating-a-project>

Project Initiation Form (PIF): The new PIF combines the superseded forms that were previously used during project initiation, the Project Need Form (PNF), and old PIF. The PIF is broken into three parts:

Part I – Facility Location, Project Purpose and Need, and General Information

Part II – Project Description

Part III – Project Costs and Responsibilities

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Project Scoring: The MaPIT application uses the information provided from the PIF to establish an overall score based on a set of criteria related to system preservation, mobility, safety, economic impacts, environmental effects, social equity, policy support, and cost effectiveness. The criteria and project score are used by MassDOT staff to assess the relative value of each proposed project and to help allocate limited state and federal funds to transportation assets.

Project Scoping Checklist: The MassDOT Highway Division has created a project scoping checklist for roadway and bridge projects to ensure that the design services include all necessary work tasks for successful completion of the project’s design. The checklist is completed after project creation and includes information derived from MaPIT and the PIF.

Pre-25% Design Scoping Procedure: The MassDOT Highway Division has created a Pre-25% Project Scoping Procedure (defined under E-21-002) to refine the scope of a project and establish a basis for the 25% design submission. It is intended to help build consensus on design approach, design elements such as cross-section and design speed, and identify potential project risks.

Project Proponents

A MassDOT Highway project may be initiated by three general types of users: MassDOT Highway Division staff; another state agency staff, such as the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); and official staff of a city or town in Massachusetts or their designated representative.

MassDOT Highway Division Project Types

The project types initiated by MassDOT Highway Division Headquarters staff generally originate from the asset management systems operated by the Division to ensure proper maintenance and repair of the Commonwealth’s roadway assets or address a known issue. Highway Division proponents are typically managers of a specific class of infrastructure asset (e.g. bridges, pavement, etc.), a policy focus area (safety, traffic, etc.), or general funding programs (interstate maintenance, National Highway System (NHS) preservation, etc.).

Project types initiated by MassDOT Highway Division District staff generally originate from a specific need that is required to ensure proper maintenance and repair of the Commonwealth’s roadway assets or address a known issue. These needs can be from any policy focus area and cover the full breadth of transportation projects, including but not limited to: safety improvements, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, sidewalk reconstruction and repairs, streetscape improvements, roadway repair and/or repaving, construction of new roadways, and interstate ramp modifications. To ensure proper

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accountability with internally initiated projects, District staff must coordinate with the responsible program or asset manager(s) prior to initiating a project.

Non-MassDOT State Agency Project Types

The project types initiated by staff of other state agencies other than MassDOT vary but are limited only to those that require use of state or federal funds for maintenance, repair, and/or modification of roadway infrastructure under the jurisdiction of that agency.

Municipal Project Types

The project types initiated for municipalities consist of a wide variety, covering the full breadth of transportation projects, including but not limited to: safety improvements, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, sidewalk reconstruction and repairs, streetscape improvements, roadway repair and/or repaving, construction of new roadways, traffic signal upgrades, and intersection reconstruction. Projects initiated by city or town staff require more in-depth review to ensure their adherence with statewide policies and compliance with the PDDG. Within the MassDOT Highway Division, the local District Office has the primary responsibility for conducting this review and assisting the community through the project initiation process outlined below.

Step 1: Project Request

- A. **Proponent Identifies Problem/Need/Opportunity in MaPIT:** The project proponent creates a polygon within the MaPIT tool that indicates the area where a transportation problem, need, and/or opportunity has been identified. Using the tool’s geoprocessing screen and question prompts, the project proponent provides all the information available at the time on the existing facility, the condition of assets, mobility issues, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, safety issues, economic development importance, social equity interest, and environmental constraints. This information is then summarized in Part I of the PIF that is autogenerated by MaPIT. If the project requires completing the Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) procedure, the proponent must also fill out Stage 1 of the ICE Form and submit it with Part 1 of the PIF (more information on ICE is located here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massdot-intersection-control-evaluation-ice>). Once complete, the proponent must submit the form for acceptance by the appropriate MassDOT Highway Division District Office; an e-mail notification of this submittal is automatically sent by MaPIT to personnel engaged in the project development process. In cases where the MassDOT Highway

See the MaPIT Guide for more assistance in creating a project.

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Division District is the project proponent, notification of this submittal will automatically be sent by MaPIT to the responsible asset or program manager(s). MassDOT staff will then conduct an initial review to clarify any issues and/or questions and to fill in any incomplete information (During this review period, the proponent will not be able to edit the PIF further until the review is complete).

- B. Communication by District: Once Part I of the PIF has been completed, District staff must communicate with the proponent to discuss the problems, needs, and/or opportunities they have identified. For municipality-initiated projects, a meeting and site visit with the proponent shall be scheduled to discuss the project in detail. The site visit with the proponent should include the following discussion items:
- **Overview of Existing Conditions** – Discussion should include a review of general asset condition, congestion levels during peak and non-peak hours, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, transit routes and schedules, the area’s context within the overall transportation system, crashes and other safety issues, and environmental conditions.
 - **Discussion of Local Context** – The proponent should describe all related background information, including: the potential economic effects, compatibility of a potential project with city/town plans (including the complete streets policy), the level of support from elected officials, and the public outreach to date along with any feedback received from interested parties.
 - **Compatibility with Regional and Statewide Policies** – District staff should review how the identified problem/need/opportunity aligns with all relevant regional and statewide policies, including: the respective statewide modal plans, studies by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs), and/or Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) tasks, MassDOT requirements for roadway cross section, ADA requirements, Healthy Transportation Policy considerations, climate resiliency, affordable housing, and any potential impacts on Environmental Justice and Title VI communities.
 - **Scope of Potential Improvement Projects** – This discussion should identify the preliminary goals and objectives for any improvement project. It should include a review of the common types of improvements used to address the identified problem/need/opportunity, including any options that the proponent has considered. It should also include the defined limits of the project, and if the proposed limits seem logical or should be extended or reduced prior to project initiation. District staff should outline basic project requirements that will need to be included in the project. This should include how pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users will be accommodated, the design justification workbook process for controlling criteria and healthy transportation requirements, and Stage 1 of the ICE form, if applicable.

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- **Discussion of Potential Risk Factors** – The District staff should review common risk factors that transportation projects encounter, including: lack of adequate right-of-way, utility impacts, stormwater mitigation, wetlands restrictions, potential wildlife impacts, potential impacts on historic properties and districts, and the need to preserve designated parkland.
- **Funding** – District staff should make sure that the proponent understands the elements of the federal funding process (such as the Transportation Improvement Program process) in their respective region and the MassDOT prioritization and scoring process. District staff may also want to highlight alternatives to federal funding such as Chapter 90 aid and state grant programs like MassWorks and MassTrails.
- **Project Approval and Project Review:** District staff should discuss how the project approval process works, and what will be required if their project gets approved. This discussion should include required submittals outlined in the MassDOT Project Review Committee (PRC) approvals letter, and the need to submit the project back to PRC for approval if there is a request to extend the limits of the project or if there is an increase in the project cost.

For projects initiated by MassDOT Highway Division staff or another non-MassDOT State Agency, District reviewing staff must communicate with the proponent to discuss the problems, needs, and/or opportunities they have identified.

- C. Determination of Project Need: Following the meeting and/or site visit with the proponent, District staff will determine if the project need is suitable for initiation of a new project. If the need for a project is determined and there is a logical, low-risk solution that meets those needs, the District staff should approve the proposed project for advancement. If there is no demonstrated need or the potential project is not well defined as a MassDOT Highway Division Project, the District staff should reject the initial request for a project. In both cases, an automated email notification will be sent to all personnel engaged with the project development process.

Part I of the PIF is amended following coordination with District staff.

In the case where the need for a project is determined but there is no clear, low-risk solution, or there are multiple ways to address the identified problem/need/opportunity, then the District staff should recommend that the proponent complete a project planning report before approval. Following completion of a project planning report, the proponent should make all necessary changes to Part I of the PIF and resubmit through MaPIT. Separately, the proponent should submit the planning report and all relevant documentation to the District. District staff

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will then review the revised submission and related materials and approve the advancement of the potential project if it is determined that there is consensus on the project definition.

Step 2: Project Proposal

- A. Proponent Outlines Improvements in MaPIT: Following the approval to advance the proposed project, the proponent will gain access to Part II and Part III of the PIF through MaPIT. The question prompts in Part II define the project that will address the problem/need/opportunity identified in Part I, and Part III addresses the proposed project cost. The proponent will provide a project scope of work and estimated costs for construction and design. Once complete, the proponent must submit the PIF for acceptance by the appropriate MassDOT Highway Division District Office; an e-mail notification of this submittal is automatically sent by MaPIT to all personnel engaged with the project development process (During this review period, the proponent will not be able to edit the PIF further until the review is complete.) Separately, the proponent should submit all supplemental documentation to the District, including any project planning report, new traffic counts, or concept plans.
- A project should not be initiated unless the proponent expects to begin design of the project within two years of approval.**
- B. District Review of PIF: The District staff will conduct a review of the PIF to clarify any issues and/or questions and to fill in any incomplete information. District staff will determine if the proposed project improvements in Part II meet the needs outlined in Part I and if they are suitable for advancement. If the proposed improvements for a project are determined to be appropriate and there is a logical, low-risk solution that meets those needs, the District staff should accept the completed PIF. If the proposed improvements do not meet the needs, the District staff should reject the PIF. In the case the PIF is rejected, the proponent will regain the ability to edit the form and resubmit if further justification or information is needed. In the case of either acceptance or rejection, an automated e-mail notification will be sent to all personnel engaged with the project development process.

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In the case where the need for a project is determined appropriate but there is no clear, low-risk solution, or there are multiple ways to address the identified problem/need/opportunity, then the District staff should recommend that the municipality complete a project planning report before approval of the completed PIF. Following completion of a project planning report, the proponent should make all necessary changes to the PIF. Separately, the proponent should submit the planning report and all relevant documentation to the District. District staff will then review the revised PIF submission and related materials and approve the advancement of the potential project if it is determined that there is consensus on the project definition.

A project planning report may be needed if the proponent cannot identify a single, clear low-risk, solution.

Step 3: Project Creation

- A. Update Project Info: The District staff will then submit the project to Project Info through a MaPIT push that occurs after the PIF is approved. Following the push of information initiated via MaPIT, Project Info will be populated with the relevant information to the fullest extent. An automated e-mail alert will be sent to all personnel engaged with the project development process notifying them of the project's acceptance including the official project name and project number. The district staff should also send the proponent a PDF printout generated by MaPIT which includes all three parts of the completed PIF along with the geoprocessing results from the application. After Project Info has been populated, the District staff must edit Project Info to address any alerts, assign a readiness date, fill out the Contract Advertising and Planning Estimator (CAPE), and to submit the project to PRC for review. The District staff should be sure to include the following key data: primary funding source(s), police/flaggers, trainees, utilities, and the design contingency amounts when filling out the CAPE.

Providing more detailed and thorough information on the project leads to a more accurate score.

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- B. Draft Project Score: The MassDOT District staff will review all pertinent information from the PIF to understand the draft project score assigned by MaPIT. The draft score for the project is based on the Highway Division’s vetted criteria derived directly from the Project Selection Advisory Committee. The draft score will be used by the Project Evaluation Working Group (also known as the Pre-PRC) to ensure the scoring is consistent between projects. All draft Project Scoresheets, including the Project Alerts sheet, and maps of the project extents should be sent to MassDOT Highway Division Highway Design, Environmental Services, and other appropriate sections by the Monday preceding the Project Evaluation Working Group meeting so it can be included on the agenda for the triannual meeting. On the immediate next day (the Tuesday preceding the Project Evaluation Working Group meeting), Highway Design and Environmental will conduct a cursory review the draft project scoresheets for completeness and conduct a preliminary review of the environmental criteria.
- C. Conduct Project Evaluation Working Group Meeting: The Working Group will meet two weeks before the PRC meeting to review and modify the draft PIFs and Project Scoresheets prepared by the District staff. The Working Group is chaired by the Highway Design Engineer and includes but is not limited to representatives from all six District offices, Environmental, Highway Design, Asset Management, Traffic Engineering, Pavement Management, Right-of-Way, Federal Aid Program Reimbursement Office (FAPRO), Office of Diversity and Civil Rights (ODCR), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Office of Transportation Planning (OTP). Following all modifications approved by the Working Group to the Project Scoresheet, the final project score and revised scoresheets must be entered into Project Info by the Thursday before the PRC meeting.
- D. Prepare Revised Project Forms and PRC meeting material: District staff will make any modifications necessary to create the final version of the PIF and Project Scoresheet for each project and will store them on Project Info in the PRC folder using the standard file naming conventions. Staff will also manually enter the final project score into the Project Review tab in Project Info for display on the PRC agenda. The PRC Secretary will then prepare the final agenda for all submitted projects on an excel spreadsheet that includes the project score and other pertinent data about the project such as the description, project number, estimated costs, design responsibility, and anticipated readiness date. The final agenda will then be sent out to the PRC committee the Monday before the meeting. Prior to the PRC meeting, the chair of the Project Evaluation Working Group, the PRC Secretary, and other necessary staff should conduct a pre-meeting to discuss details of the agenda in preparation for the upcoming meeting.

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E. Draft PRC Agenda Created and Review: The PRC Secretary will generate a draft PRC Agenda from Project Info and submit to the Working Group Chair for review; this action will occur no later than the Friday before PRC. The Working Group Chair will confirm that all projects reviewed at pre-PRC are represented and that the scores are correct. The Working Group Chair will also populate the “pre-PRC Alerts” column of the Agenda with any risks, alerts, permitting considerations, or talking points otherwise identified at the pre-PRC meeting for possible discussion during PRC. The Working Group Chair will return the completed agenda to the PRC Secretary no later than noon on the Monday before PRC, and the PRC Secretary will submit the Final Agenda to all attendees by close of business.

Timeline for Project Review Prior to PRC Meeting

<i>Weeks Before PRC Meeting</i>	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
3					
2	Draft Project Scoresheets and maps of Project Extents Due	Draft Scoresheets are Reviewed by Highway Design and Environmental		Pre-PRC Meeting	
1	Working Group Chair completes review of PRC Meeting			Final Project Scores and Project Scoresheets due (uploaded to Project Info)	PRC Secretary submits draft PRC agenda to Working Group Chair for Review
0	Agenda, PRC Secretary distributes to attendees			PRC Meeting	

F. Conduct Project Review Committee (PRC) Meeting: The PRC meets three times a year (or more as determined by the Chief Engineer) and is chaired by the Chief Engineer. The PRC is comprised

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of the Deputy Chief Engineer of Project Development, District Project Development Engineers, PRC Secretary, and representatives from Asset Management, Project Management, Environmental, Right-of-Way, Bridges and Structures, Traffic Engineering, Highway Maintenance, Highway Operations, FAPRO, FHWA, and OTP. The PRC will review the Project Forms and take one of the following actions:

APPROVE:	The project moves forward into design and programming review by the metropolitan planning organization (MPO);
TABLE:	No action is taken on the project and it is kept on the agenda for the next meeting; or
DENY:	The project is removed from consideration for design and programming review by the MPO. It should be noted that projects are often denied at this stage because it is determined by the PRC that funding processes outside the Transportation Improvement Program are more appropriate and afford a more streamlined implementation.

For approved projects, the PRC will assign an estimated advertising date for a project that has been programmed in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) or Capital Investment Plan (CIP). Otherwise, an advertising date will be assigned outside the 5-year STIP/CIP cycle until the project is programmed.

The Project Manager assigned to the project should evaluate and make changes to the Project Scoping checklist and PIF if necessary. The PRC Secretary will prepare a meeting summary memorandum and send it to the PRC meeting members.

- G. Notify External Proponents (including Municipalities): The MassDOT District Office will prepare a letter to any external proponent describing the PRC action with copies to the District Project Development Engineers, Highway Administrator, Chief Engineer, Regional Planning Organization; upload the letter to the Project Info Repository; and send an email notification of approval to OTP; and, when the proponent is a municipality, the Director of Roadway Project Management. The District Offices will notify each MPO via copy of each letter for the projects approved in their respective region(s) with specific steps that the proponents need to take within 2 years to demonstrate sufficient progress. The District will expect the letter to be signed and returned as acknowledgment of the municipality's responsibility. The District Office shall also notify municipalities of MassDOT projects within their communities. Templates for these notification letters are located at: S:\MassHighway\PRC\Sample Approval Letters.

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- H. Update Project Info: The PRC Secretary will update the Project Management Tab with the Project Manager identified by the PRC, project PRC status, and any other information necessary from the PRC Meeting. The Advertising Program Manager will then update ad dates and any pertinent information necessary.
- I. Request PARS Number: The assigned Project Manager then request PARS numbers for payroll and project development costs related to the project using information from the completed PIF.
- J. Conduct Project Scoping Meeting: The project manager will conduct a Project Scoping Meeting using the Project Scoping Checklist per E-21-002. The Scoping Checklist is available here: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/massdot-highway-project-development-tools>

Project Deactivation

The list of projects approved by the Project Review Committee will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it consists only of projects actively in development that continue to meet the project need outlined at their initiation. Projects that meet the criteria listed in the steps below for both municipalities and state agencies will be removed from that list.

PROCEDURE FOR MUNICIPAL PROJECTS

- 1) STATE REQUEST FOR DEACTIVATION
 - a) After one year without activity, municipality receives email notification from the District reminding them of requirements in PRC letter.
 - b) After two years without activity, municipality receives email from the District that project is going to be deactivated unless they respond within thirty (30) days. Email will also direct municipality to resubmit to PRC (as a new project through MaPIT) if they wish to restart the project once it has been deactivated.
 - c) After thirty (30) days without a response, the District then emails this communication to the Advertising Program Manager requesting deactivation.
 - d) Advertising Program Manager marks the project as inactive in Project Info and notifies the Project Manager and section director.
 - e) Advertising Program Manager adds the project to the next Project Review Committee meeting agenda under the Deactivated section.
 - f) Project Manager archives all project documentation including:
 - i) Emails
 - ii) Written correspondence
 - iii) Project submittals
 - g) Project Manager submits PARS Number deactivation request to FAPRO.

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2) MUNICIPAL REQUEST FOR DEACTIVATION

- a) Municipality requests deactivation in writing to the District Highway Director (DHD) with a copy sent to the assigned Project Manager.
- b) The District e-mails this communication to the Advertising Program Manager.
- c) Advertising Program Manager marks the project as inactive in Project Info and notifies the Project Manager and section director.
- d) Advertising Program Manager adds the project to the next Project Review Committee meeting agenda under the Deactivated section.
- e) Project Manager archives all project documentation including:
 - i) Emails
 - ii) Written correspondence
 - iii) Project submittals
- f) Project Manager submits PARS Number deactivation request to FAPRO.

PROCEDURE FOR STATE PROJECTS

3) Once the Department identifies a project for deactivation, then:

- a) DHD e-mails the Advertising Program Manager requesting deactivation.
- b) Advertising Program Manager marks the project as inactive in Project Info and notifies the Project Manager and section director.
- c) Advertising Program Manager adds the project to the next Project Review Committee meeting agenda under the Deactivated section.
- d) DHD submits letter to affected municipalities, if needed.
- e) Project Manager archives all project documentation including:
 - i) Emails
 - ii) Written correspondence
 - iii) Project submittals
- f) Project Manager submits PARS Number deactivation request to FAPRO.