

MEMORANDUM

To: MPO Policy Committee

From: CMAP

Date: December 18, 2024

Subject: Regional Transportation Plan update

Action Requested: Information

Purpose

CMAP will provide an update on the development of the next Regional Transportation Plan:

- Federal guidance recommends that CMAP revisit how it defines and prioritizes projects for inclusion in the RTP. CMAP convened a resource group to inform updates to these policies and procedures.
- CMAP is exploring how the region identifies projects for evaluation and prioritization in the 2026 RTP. The changes under consideration are responsive to federal and state regulations and feedback from the resource group.

Background

CMAP is required by federal and state regulations to develop a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) every four years that includes a fiscally constrained list of priority transportation projects over the planning horizon. A critical step in that process is the identification of capital investments that hold the potential to move the region closer to its goals for the regional transportation network. These are projects that can change the way people live, work, travel, and conduct business within northeastern Illinois either through capacity changes, traffic management strategies, or significant investment in maintaining the facilities that already serve the region's transportation needs.

In GO TO 2040 and ON TO 2050, these projects were referred to as Regionally Significant Projects and Major Capital Investments.

The identification and prioritization of projects to include in the RTP is an important step in both identifying the funding needs of the region over the planning horizon and determining whether existing funding streams can support those anticipated needs.

In addition to helping the region financially prepare for its long-term transportation needs, this identification and review of projects is an important step in ensuring the region will remain in conformity with air quality requirements established by the Clean Air Act. Thus, projects must

undergo an air quality conformity analysis before they can be included in the constrained project listing.

In summary, CMAP identifies and evaluates projects for three primary reasons:

1. **Financial constraint and prioritization of investment** - Transportation funding is limited. Evaluating and ranking these large, expensive projects will support funding decisions and support more strategic investment decisions.
2. **Performance-based planning** – The use of performance measures and targets informs the prioritization of investment. Because projects compete for limited funds and have the potential to impact the regional transportation system and quality of life in the CMAP planning area, it is important to evaluate these projects for alignment with the region’s overall goals and objectives before being fiscally constrained within the RTP.
3. **Air quality conformity** – Projects with the potential to impact emissions within the region cannot be eligible for federal action, including federal funding, without first being evaluated for air quality conformity.

Previous approaches and federal feedback

As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and state designated Regional Planning Agency (RPA) for northeastern Illinois, CMAP must list regional projects in its RTP that are subject to evaluation and prioritization before potential implementation (referred to herein as Regional Capital Projects).

These regulations set a minimum standard for how CMAP should ensure that future transportation investments guided by the RTP are equitable, environmentally sustainable, and financially viable. The standards generally revolve around regional planning, prioritization, and advocacy (state requirements) alongside air quality conformity, financial feasibility, and environmental justice (federal requirements).

Visit the CMAP Engage webpage for more context and information on these regulations: <https://engage.cmap.illinois.gov/rsp-resource-group>.

GO TO 2040 (2010 and 2014)

In GO TO 2040 and the GO TO 2040 Update, the universe of projects evaluated and considered for inclusion in the Major Capital Projects (MCP) list was small in scope due to a narrow definition. These plans defined MCPs as “large projects with a significant effect on the capacity of the region’s transportation system, including extensions or additional lanes on the interstate system, entirely new expressways, or similar changes to the passenger rail system.”¹

The plans also specified that expansion of arterial roads and intersection improvements should not be defined as major capital projects; nor should bus facilities unless they involved a dedicated lane on an expressway. No dollar threshold was set for MCPs.

¹ CMAP, “GO TO 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan,” October 2010, https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/17842/long_plan_FINAL_100610_web.pdf/1e1ff482-7013-4f5f-90d5-90d395087a53.

Feedback from federal partners

Every four years, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conduct a certification review of CMAP and the overall regional transportation planning process for conformance with federal planning regulations.

In 2014, the certification review stated that the “identification of Major Capital Projects should be based on impact, not scope, of projects.”² For example, bus rapid transit (BRT) systems may have similar service characteristics and travel benefits to rail transit and should, therefore, be evaluated along with more traditional heavy rail and commuter rail projects.

Similarly, highway reconstruction projects may have regional impacts even if they add little or no capacity to the network. It was also stated that a more holistic MCP definition could better capture true regional priorities.

ON TO 2050 (2018 and 2022)

In ON TO 2050 and the ON TO 2050 Update, CMAP responded to federal guidance from the 2014 certification review with a Regionally Significant Projects (RSPs) process. Specifically, these plans expanded the universe of potential projects to include investments which met either of the following conditions:

- Costs at least \$100 million and either (a) changes capacity on the National Highway System (NHS) or is a new expressway or principal arterial, or (b) changes capacity on transit services with some separate rights of way or shared right of way where transit has priority over other traffic, or
- Costs at least \$250 million and improves the state-of-good-repair for a particular highway or transit facility.

These changes introduced a dollar threshold, captured eligible BRT projects, and incorporated non-capacity-changing projects, like major highway reconstructions, that could have regional impacts without adding or removing lanes.

Feedback from federal partners

The most recent certification review was conducted in 2022 and included the recommendation that CMAP “revisit the threshold criteria for Regionally Significant Projects” prior to the adoption of the next long-range transportation plan.

The recommendation further explained that “the goal for RSPs should be to provide for a reasonably sized universe of projects to be considered and allow the plan to identify and prioritize the most critical projects in the region and to focus resources on accomplishing them.”

The review also stated that ON TO 2025’s updated RSP thresholds “...are capturing many

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https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/282605/2014ChicagoPlanningCertificationReview_Final.pdf/9ae61d62-eaf5-4be6-a463-909fa9449b08

arterial roadway projects that may not be fully representative of the intended highest priority considerations or representative of the multimodal goals of the region.”³

Changes under consideration for identifying, designating, and prioritizing projects

In response to federal and state regulations, certification review recommendations, CMAP is exploring potential updates to how the region identifies and assigns fiscal constraint to projects with the potential to impact on regional travel and the quality of life for the people of northeastern Illinois.

To help inform this effort, CMAP convened a resource group comprised of the region’s major transportation agencies and advocates, including county transportation departments, IDOT, the region’s transit authorities (CTA, Metra, Pace, RTA), Illinois Tollway, and others (MPC, CNT, academia). The resource group has met six times since January 2024.

Guided by federal recommendations and input from the resource group, these key changes are under consideration

- 1. Score-based ranking** - Projects would be prioritized using a tiered ranking system based on their alignment with regional goals. While all projects within the constrained budget would remain eligible for funding, those categorized as the highest priority would be elevated in the RTP and prioritized to receive planning and coordination support, in addition to being better positioned for competitive funding programs.
- 2. Evaluation of a broader range of projects** - The parameters used for evaluating potential projects will be assessed to include a wider variety of project types. These potential adjustments aim to highlight projects like large-scale Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) or active transportation projects, which were not previously considered alongside more traditional expansion and system preservation projects, despite their potential to have impacts on the performance of the regional transportation system.

Requested: Information

Appendix A: Term definitions

Appendix B: Regional Transportation System Map

Appendix C: Exemption Status by Work Type

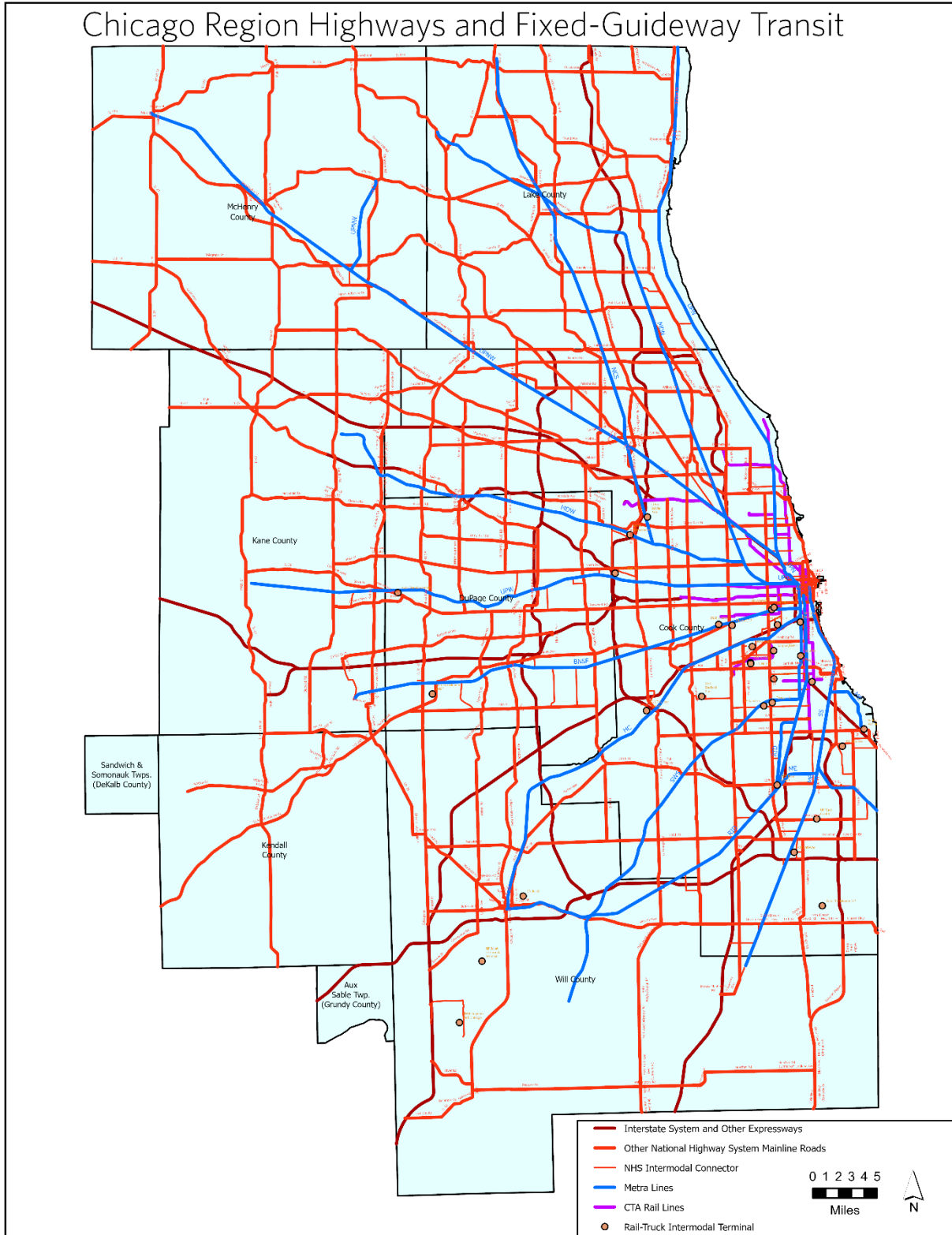
³ https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/282605/2023-03-07_Chicago+TMA+Certification+Report+-+Transmittal+Letter.pdf/9cf46263-17c6-e91a-2a5b-7793b887d8a2?t=1678287881851

Appendix A: Term definitions

- **Bus rapid transit**, as defined by the Federal Transit Administration, is a high-quality bus-based transit system that delivers fast and efficient service that may include dedicated lanes, busways, traffic signal priority, off-board fare collection, elevated platforms, and enhanced stations/stops.⁴ Typically, bus rapid transit projects will also include major service improvements or expansions to vehicle fleet.
- **Exempt project** means a transportation project that is exempt from regional transportation air quality conformity analysis pursuant to [CFR 40 §93.126](#) and/or a transportation project with documented categorical exclusions from NEPA approvals typically required by the FHWA or FTA pursuant to [CFR 23 §771.117](#).
- **Fixed guideway transit infrastructure** means a public transportation facility or vehicle which uses exclusive rights-of-way or partially exclusive rights-of-way where transit has priority over other modes of travel. This includes rapid rail transit, light rail, commuter rail, bus rapid transit, busways, and automated people movers.
- **Programmatic investment** means a transportation project or a collection of transportation projects that do not meet the eligibility criteria and thresholds of regional capital projects but are included in the Plan's TIP.
- **Regional transportation system**, includes both the National Highway System (NHS) and the fixed guideway transit system. The NHS includes roadways classified as Interstate, Freeway or Expressway, and Other Principal Arterials. It also includes roads important to national defense, plus intermodal connectors. A static map of the regional transportation system is shown in [Appendix B](#).
- **Year of expenditure (YOE)** means the year when an expense, capital or operational, is anticipated to occur. YOE accounts for inflation in project costs over the plan horizon.

⁴ <https://www.transit.dot.gov/research-innovation/bus-rapid-transit>

Appendix B: Regional Transportation System Map



Appendix C: Exemption Status by Work Type

A project's exempt status is determined from its work types. The following is a list of all **work types** and their exempt status.

Work Type Code	Work Type Name	Exempt Status	Description
Bicycle and Pedestrian - Maintenance			
E-SharedMaint	Maintain Shared Path Facility	Exempt	Maintain Existing Shared Path Facility
E-ADAMAINT	Maintain/Repair ADA Infrastructure	Exempt	Maintain or Repair Existing ADA Infrastructure (Roadways)
E-BIKEMAINT	Maintain Bicycle Facility	Exempt	Maintain Existing Bicycle Facility
E-PEDMAINT	Maintain Pedestrian Facility	Exempt	Maintain Existing Pedestrian Facility
Bicycle and Pedestrian - Modernization			
E-ADAIMP	Improve ADA Infrastructure	Exempt	Improve Existing ADA Infrastructure (Roadways)
E-ADANEW	New ADA Infrastructure	Exempt	Install New ADA Infrastructure (Roadways)
E-BIKEIMP	Improve Bicycle Facility	Exempt	Improve Existing Bicycle Facility
E-BIKEPARK	Bicycle Parking	Exempt	Install New Bicycle Parking
E-PEDIMP	Improve Pedestrian Facility	Exempt	Improve Existing Pedestrian Facility
E-SharedModern	Improve Shared Path Facility	Exempt	Improve Existing Shared Path Facility
E-SRTS	Safe Routes to School	Exempt	Provide Safe Routes to School
Bicycle and Pedestrian - Expansion			
E-BIKENEW	New Bicycle Facility	Exempt	Build New Bicycle Facility
E-PEDNEW	New Pedestrian Facility	Exempt	Build New Pedestrian Facility
E-SharedNew	New Shared Use Path	Exempt	Build New Shared Use Path
Bridge - Maintenance			
B-DECK	Bridge Deck - Repair/Rehab	Exempt	Repair or Rehabilitate Bridge Deck
B-HYD	Bridge Deck - Hydro-Demolition	Exempt	Rehabilitate Bridge Deck Using Hydro-Demolition
B-OVR	Bridge Deck - Overlay	Exempt	Overlay Bridge Deck
B-PCHF	Bridge Deck - Full Depth Patching	Exempt	Complete Full Depth Patching on Bridge Deck
B-PCHP	Bridge Deck - Partial Depth Patching	Exempt	Complete Partial Depth Patching on Bridge Deck
B-PNT	Bridge/Structure - Paint	Exempt	Paint Bridge
B-REPAIR	Bridge/Structure - Reconst/Rehab No Chng in #, Width, or Lane	Exempt	Reconstruct/Repair Bridge
B-SUB	Bridge Substructure - Repair/Rehab	Exempt	Repair or Rehabilitate Bridge Substructure
B-SUP	Bridge Superstructure - Repair/Rehab	Exempt	Repair or Rehabilitate Bridge Superstructure
Bridge - Modernization			
B-RECNG	Bridge/Structure - Reconst/Rehab Chng in Lane Use/Widths	Exempt Tested	Reconfigure Bridge

B-REPLACE	Bridge/Structure - Replace	Exempt	Replace Bridge
Bridge - Expansion			
B-NEW	Bridge/Structure - New	Not Exempt	Build New Bridge
Highway - Maintenance			
H-C/G	Highway/Road - Curb And Gutter	Exempt	Work on Curb and Gutters
H-CLVT	Highway/Road - Repair/Replace Culvert	Exempt	Repair or Replace Culvert
H-INTRC	Highway/Road - Intersection Reconstruction	Exempt	Reconstruct Intersection (Within Current Footprint)
H-IRS	Highway/Road - Intermittent Resurfacing	Exempt	Resurface Part Of Road
H-PATCH	Highway/Road - Pavement Patching	Exempt	Patch Pavement
H-RCINKND	Highway/Road - Reconstruct in Kind	Exempt	Reconstruct Road with No Change to Number Of Lanes or Pavement Width
H-RS	Highway/Road - Resurface (with No Lane Widening)	Exempt	Resurface Road with No Change to Lane Widths
Highway - Modernization			
E-NOIS	Noise Attenuation	Exempt	Reduce Noise By Road
H-ALIGN	Highway/Road - Vertical/Horizontal Alignment (e.g. Clearance)	Exempt	Adjust Alignment Of Road
H-CLTL	Highway/Road - Continuous Bi-Directional Turn Lanes	Exempt Tested	Add Bi-Directional Turn Lane
H-HOT3	Highway/Road - HOT 3-Plus Lanes	Not Exempt	Add High Occupancy Toll Lane
H-HOV	Highway/Road - HOV Lanes	Not Exempt	Add High Occupancy Vehicle Lane
H-INFO	Highway/Road - Directional/Informational Signs	Exempt	Install Informational Signs
H-INTIMP	Highway/Road - Intersection Improvement	Exempt	Improve Intersection (Add/Change/Remove Turn Lanes or Otherwise Alter Current Footprint)
H-IPASS	Highway/Road - I-Pass Improvement	Exempt Tested	Improve tollway I-Pass System
H-RAB	Highway/Road - Roundabout	Exempt	Build Roundabout
H-RCNST	Highway/Road - Reconst with Change in Use or Width Of Lane	Exempt Tested	Reconstruct and Widen Road with No Change to Number Of Lanes
H-RL	Highway/Road - Remove Lanes	Not Exempt	Remove Lanes From Road

H-RRGS	Highway/Road - Railroad Grade Separation	Not Exempt	Highway-Railroad Grade Separation
H-WRS	Highway/Road - Widen Lanes And Resurface	Exempt Tested	Resurface and Widen Road with No Change to Number Of Lanes
I-RCNST	Interchange - Reconstruction	Exempt	Reconstruct Interchange with No Change to Movements
Highway - Expansion			
H-AL	Highway/Road - Add Lanes	Not Exempt	Add New Through Lanes to Road
H-EXT	Highway/Road - Extend Road	Not Exempt	Extend Road
H-NEW	Highway/Road - New Road	Not Exempt	Build New Road
I-EXP	Interchange - Expand (New Movements Added to Interchange)	Not Exempt	Add New Ramps/Movements to Interchange
I-NEW	Interchange - New	Not Exempt	Build New Interchange
Highway - Other			
H-COR	Highway/Road - Corridor Improvement	Not Exempt	Improve Overall Road Corridor (Added Capacity)
H-UTIL	Highway/Road - Utility Relocation	Exempt	Relocation Of Utilities
H-STWTR	Highway/Road - Stormwater Infrastructure	Exempt	Stormwater Infrastructure
H-GRNINF	Highway/Road - Green Infrastructure	Exempt	Install green infrastructure treatments, such as bioswales, permeable pavers, etc.
H-EVINF	Highway/Road - EV Infrastructure	Exempt	Infrastructure to charge electric vehicles
H-EV	Highway/Road - Electric Vehicles	Exempt	Electric Vehicles
E-LS	Enhancement - Landscaping	Exempt	Conduct Landscaping
Safety			
A-BAR	Safety - Barriers	Exempt	Install Safety Barriers
A-BEA	Safety - Beacons	Exempt	Install Safety Beacons
A-FNC	Safety - Fencing	Exempt	Erect Safety Fencing
A-GRD	Safety - Guardrails	Exempt	Erect Safety Guardrails
A-LTS	Safety - Lighting	Exempt	Install Safety Lighting
A-MED	Safety - Median Projects	Exempt	Work on Road Median to Improve Safety
A-OPT	Safety - Opticom Equipment	Exempt	Install Opticom Safety Equipment
A-OTH	Safety - Other	Exempt	Safety Improvement
A-PMRK	Safety - Pavement Marking	Exempt	Install Safety Pavement Marking

A-RDIET	Safety - Road Diet	Exempt Tested	Convert or Reconfigure Lanes to Improve Safety
A-RRXING	Safety - Railroad Crossing Improvements	Exempt	Install Railroad Crossing Safety Improvements
A-SHDR	Safety - Shoulder Improvements	Exempt	Improve Shoulder Safety
A-SKIDT	Safety - Skid Treatments	Exempt	Install Safety Skid Treatment
Signals			
S-ASNG	Signals - Add Signals At Single Intersection	Exempt	Add Traffic Signals to An Intersection
S-MOD	Signals - Modernization	Exempt	Upgrade Traffic Signals
S-NEW	Signals - New Signals for Multiple Intersections	Not Exempt	Add Traffic Signals to Several Intersections
S-TIM	Signals - Interconnects And Timing	Not Exempt	Coordinate Traffic Signal Timing
Transit - Maintenance			
C-MAINT	Rail Stations - Maintain, Rehabilitate, Replace	Exempt	Maintain Rail Station
F-YRDS	Facility - Towers And Yards	Exempt	Work on Rail tower or Yard
J-REHAB	Rolling Stock - Rehabilitate Vehicles	Exempt	Rehabilitate Buses/Trains
J-REP	Rolling Stock - Replace Existing Vehicles	Exempt Tested	Replace Buses/Trains
M-MAINT	Multi-Modal Center - Maintain, Rehabilitate, Replace	Exempt	Maintain Multi-Modal Center
M-RELOC	Multi-Modal Center - Relocate	Exempt Tested	Move Multi-Modal Center
O-OPS	Operations - Transit Operating Assistance	Exempt	Fund Transit Operating Assistance
P-MAINT	Parking - Maintain, Rehabilitate, Replace	Exempt	Maintain Commuter Parking Lot
R-MAINT	Rail Line - Maintain, Rehabilitate, Replace	Exempt	Maintain Rail Line
U-CPSMAINT	CPS - Maintenance	Exempt	Maintain Transit Communications, Power and Signal Equipment
V-MAINSTOR	Vehicle Facility - Maintenance/Storage	Exempt	Work on Vehicle Maintenance or Storage Facility
V-MAINT	Vehicle Facility - Maintenance	Exempt	Work on Vehicle Maintenance Facility
V-STOR	Vehicle Facility - Storage	Exempt	Work on Vehicle Storage Facility
X-MAINT	Transfer Facility - Maintain, Rehabilitate, Replace	Exempt	Maintain Transfer Facility
Transit - Modernization			

C-IMP	Station - Improve with Change in Service	Exempt Tested	Improve Rail Station
C-MOD	Rail Stations - Modernize, Replace	Exempt	Modernize Rail Station
C-RELOC	Station - Relocate	Exempt Tested	Move Rail Station
D-FAC	ADA - Transit Facility Improvements	Exempt	Improve Disability Access to Transit Facility
D-VEH	ADA - Transit Vehicle Improvements	Exempt	Improve Disability Access to Transit Vehicle
F-OFC	Facility - Office Facilities/Equipment	Exempt	Acquire Office Facility and/or Equipment
F-REV	Facility - Revenue Collection Equipment	Exempt	Acquire Revenue Collection Equipment
F-SHOP	Facility - Shop Facilities/Equipment	Exempt	Acquire Shop Facility and/or Equipment
F-SPTV	Facility - Signal Priority for Transit	Exempt	Install Transit Signal Priority System
F-TRN	Facility - Bus Turnaround	Exempt	Install Bus Turnaround
J-FUEL	Rolling Stock - Alternate Fuels	Exempt	Acquire Alternative Fuel Buses/Trains
J-INF	Alternative Fuel Infrastructure	Exempt	Install Alternative Fuel Infrastructure
J-RETRO	Rolling Stock - Retrofit Engine	Exempt	Retrofit Bus/Train Engines
M-IMP	Multi-Modal Center - Improve with Change in Service	Exempt Tested	Improve Multi-Modal Center
P-RELOC	Parking - Relocate Lot or Garage	Exempt Tested	Move Commuter Parking Lot
R-IMP	Rail Line - Improve Line	Exempt Tested	Improve Rail Line
T-IMP	Bus Routes - Major Service Improvement	Not Exempt	Make A Major Improvement to Bus Routes
T-IMPSVC	Bus Routes - Improve Service	Exempt	Improve Bus Service
U-COM	CPS - Communications	Exempt	Work on Transit Communications
U-CPSIMP	CPS - Improvement	Exempt	Modernize Transit Communications, Power and Signal Equipment
U-POW	CPS - Power	Exempt	Work on Transit Power
U-SIGS	CPS - Signals	Exempt	Work on Transit Signals
X-IMP	Transfer Facility - Improve with Change in Service	Exempt Tested	Improve Transfer Facility
X-MOD	Transfer Facility - Modernize, Replace	Exempt	Modernize Transfer Facility

X-RELOC	Transfer Facility - Relocate	Exempt Tested	Move Transfer Facility
Transit - Expansion			
C-NEW	Station - New	Not Exempt	Build New Rail Station
J-EXP	Rolling Stock - Expand Fleet	Not Exempt	Expand Bus/Train Fleet
M-NEW	Multi-Modal Center - New	Exempt Tested	Build New Multi-Modal Center
P-EXP	Parking - Expand Number Of Spaces	Exempt Tested	Add Spaces to Commuter Parking Lot
P-NEW	Parking - New Lot or Garage	Exempt Tested	Build New Commuter Parking Lot
R-EXP	Rail Line - Expand Line	Not Exempt	Extend Rail Line or Expand Line Capacity
R-NEW	Rail Line - New Line	Not Exempt	Build New Rail Line
T-EXP	Bus Routes - Major Expansion	Not Exempt	Expand Bus Routes Significantly
T-NEWSVC	Bus Routes - New Service	Exempt	Introduce New Bus Service
X-NEW	Transfer Facility - New	Exempt Tested	Build New Transfer Facility
Transit - Other			
O-C&A	Operations - Contingency And Administration	Exempt	Fund Contingency and Administration
Other Work Types			
E-HIS	Historic Preservation	Exempt	Preserve Historic Facility
Z-Museum	Miscellaneous - Transportation Museum	Exempt	Transportation Museum
E-MODE	Travel Demand Management	Exempt	Implement Travel Demand Management
Z-OTH	Miscellaneous - Project Types Not Listed	Not Exempt	Work on Miscellaneous Project Requiring Air Quality Analysis
Z-OTHEX	Miscellaneous - Exempt Projects	Exempt	Work on Miscellaneous Project Not Used in Air Quality Analysis
Z-OTHXTST	Miscellaneous - Exempt Tested Projects	Exempt Tested	Work on Miscellaneous Project Type Included in the Travel Demand Model

UPDATED: July 2022