

Technical Report 8 Highlights: Considerations for Project Prioritization

This report documents the method for prioritization of projects for National Highway Freight Program (NHFP) funding, and offers alternative approaches to finalizing selection among projects achieving high priority. This report does not present rail and waterway projects, which appear in a subsequent document. In addition, the report reviews freight bottlenecks defined in Technical Report 7 that are not addressed by means of projects in current ODOT construction plans, and that are candidates for the development of improvement projects in the future. Finally, the document describes innovative Intelligent Transportation System solutions employed by ODOT that improve freight operations and expand the gains from other investments, and are a necessity for the technological changes transforming the transportation system locally, nationally and globally.

Based on the goal of the Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan, several categories of criteria were selected to evaluate projects for their suitability for NHFP funding. These categories included: safety and security, infrastructure preservation, mobility, economic vitality, environmental responsibility, and strategic value. Projects on the National Highway System in the Eight Year Construction Work Plan were evaluated against these criteria to determine their strength for improving the freight transportation system. A total of 190 projects were evaluated, and the top 54 were set aside as candidates for NHFP funding. The report outlines various guiding principles that ODOT senior staff could use to further refine the list of 54 projects, and to narrow down the list to those projects which should receive the NHFP funds over the next five years. These principles included: level annual funding, corridor focus, geographic diversification, highest scoring, stakeholder priorities, large project or small project concentration, designation of critical rural freight corridors.

In addition to reviewing freight transportation locations with projects, the report looks at 25 identified bottleneck locations that did not have a project associated with that location in the first five years of the CWP. These locations should receive further engineering review and consideration by ODOT staff in future years.

The report also describes efforts by ODOT's Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) branch which employs and maintains a number of technologies that benefit freight. This program and related improvements will benefit freight considerably under the evaluation criteria noted above, particularly safety and security, mobility and economic vitality.