

## Background

The project profiles presented in this Appendix provide background information supporting the Department of Transportation's New Starts Program funding recommendations for FY 2007. The Department's funding recommendations are being provided to Congress pursuant to 49 USC 5309(k)(1). The funding recommendations are based on the decision criteria defined in 49 USC 5309(d).

Under 49 USC 5309(d), major capital investment grants for the construction of a new fixed guideway system or the extension of an existing system seeking \$75 million or greater in Federal New Starts funds may be made only if the Secretary determines that the proposed project is:

- (A) based on the results of an alternatives analysis and preliminary engineering;
- (B) justified based on a comprehensive review of its mobility improvements, environmental benefits, cost effectiveness, and operating efficiencies, economic development effects and public transportation supportive land use policies and future patterns and
- (C) supported by an acceptable degree of local financial commitment (including evidence of stable and dependable funding sources) to construct, maintain, and operate the system or extension, and maintain and operate the entire public transportation system without requiring a reduction in existing public transportation services or level of service to operate the proposed project.

The 49 USC 5309(d) criteria provide a basis for selecting those projects which are the most worthy of Federal funds from among the eligible projects. To this end, the New Starts project profiles describe the fixed guideway projects that are most advanced, and evaluate them in terms of the Section 5309(d) criteria.

This *Annual Report on New Starts* includes profiles for each project under a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) and proposed project undergoing final design or preliminary engineering. In addition to providing information to Congress, the document serves as guidance to project sponsors so that improvements can be made. Since projects can be expected to continue to change as they progress through the development process, the ratings for projects that are not yet recommended for FFGA's should not be construed as a statement about the ultimate merit of the project. Rather, the ratings provide an assessment of the project's current strengths and weaknesses.

Profiles for projects that are under construction – or, in a few cases, in revenue operation - are also included in this report if additional funds are needed in FY 2007 to fulfill the FFGA.

In general, the profiles for projects in final design and preliminary engineering include the following sections:

- (1) **Description:** This section briefly describes a project's physical characteristics (scope) and peak period operating plan. This section also summarizes the transportation problem or problems the proposed project is intended to address. Projects' summary rating of *High*, *Medium-High*, *Medium*, *Medium-Low*, or *Low* are presented in this section, as are areas of concern or action items which the project sponsor must address prior to subsequent evaluations.
- (2) **Project Development History and Current Status:** This section identifies where the project is in the development process. It indicates, for example, when the project was

approved into preliminary engineering (and final design, if appropriate), as well as when it completed – or is anticipating to complete – Federal environmental review requirements.

- (3) **Significant Changes Since FY 2006 Evaluation:** This section describes significant changes in the project scope, capital cost, travel demand forecasts, or financial plan since the previous evaluation, which contribute to an understanding of why the information reported in the FY 2007 *Annual Report on New Starts* may be different from last year's data.
- (4) **Project Justification:** This section presents an evaluation of each project's merit based on the criteria cited in 49 USC 5309(d) and FTA's *Final Rule* on New Starts project evaluation and rating, which became effective April 6, 2001. Information on transit supportive land use and project cost effectiveness is summarized. For cost effectiveness, issues related to the estimate of project costs and benefits are identified. Ratings and data are also reported for the other project justification criteria, including: mobility improvements, environmental benefits, operating efficiencies, and other factors (where appropriate).
- (5) **Local Financial Commitment:** This section presents the evaluation of each project's financial plan and local financial commitment for the New Starts share, capital financial plan, and operating financial plan.

Profiles of projects which are “exempt” from evaluation under the New Starts criteria include only the description and status sections. Additionally, profiles for projects covered by existing FFGAs include only the information contained under the description and status sections, because projects are not re-evaluated once a funding agreement is in place.