

HRTPO Guidance On



**SMART
SCALE**

*Funding the Right
Transportation Projects
in Virginia*



July 2024

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ABSTRACT

This document provides information on the process used by the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) to determine whether to provide a resolution of support for applicable projects to be submitted under the SMART SCALE statewide project prioritization process and whether to submit project applications in response to requests by other entities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT & DISCLAIMERS

Prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). The contents of this report reflect the views of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO). The HRTPO is responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the FHWA, VDOT or Hampton Roads Planning District Commission. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation. FHWA or VDOT acceptance of this report as evidence of fulfillment of the objectives of this planning study does not constitute endorsement/approval of the need for any recommended improvements nor does it constitute approval of their location and design or a commitment to fund any such improvements. Additional project level environmental impact assessments and/or studies of alternatives may be necessary.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

The HRTPO assures that no person shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, handicap, sex, age, or income status as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent authorities, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subject to discrimination under any program or activity. The HRTPO Title VI Plan provides this assurance, information about HRTPO responsibilities, and a Discrimination Complaint Form.

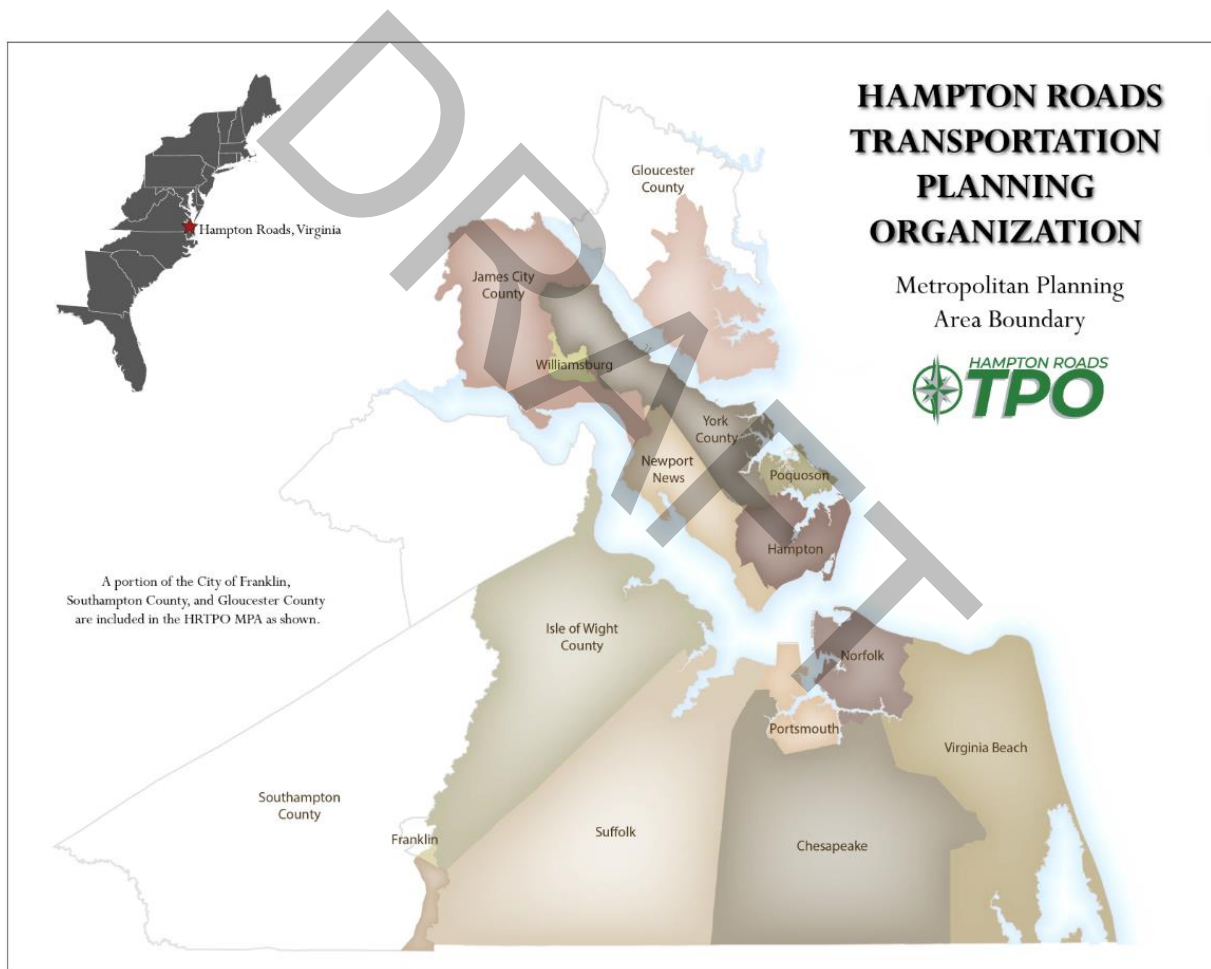
TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW.....	1
What is SMART SCALE?	2
SMART SCALE Exclusions	3
SMART SCALE Project Screening.....	3
SMART SCALE Evaluation Measures	4
SMART SCALE Weighting Typologies and Frameworks	4
Applicant Eligibility.....	6
Relevant Regional Entities.....	7
SMART SCALE Application Process Overview	9
HRTPO GUIDANCE ON SMART SCALE	10
When HRTPO is the Applicant.....	11
When HRTPO is requested to support the application of a locality or transit agency	11
When HRPDC is requested to support the application of a locality or transit agency	12
APPENDIX	13

OVERVIEW

The Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Hampton Roads area. As such, it is a federally mandated transportation policy board comprised of representatives from local, state, and federal governments, transit agencies, and other stakeholders and is responsible for transportation planning and programming for the Hampton Roads metropolitan planning area (MPA).

The MPA is comprised of the cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg; the counties of Isle of Wight, James City, and York; a portion of the city of Franklin; and portions of the counties of Gloucester and Southampton.



The purpose of this document is to provide guidance regarding the SMART SCALE statewide project prioritization process.

WHAT IS SMART SCALE?

House Bill 2 (HB2), adopted by the General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor in 2014, required the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) to develop a statewide prioritization process for capacity expansion projects based on a comparison of a project's relative benefit to its cost. Following nearly a year of development, the HB2 process was approved by the CTB on June 17, 2015. The legislation set the requirement that the HB2 process be used to develop the Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) starting with the FY 2017 – FY 2022 SYIP approved by the CTB in June 2016. On June 14, 2016, the new name for the prioritization process was announced – SMART SCALE. SMART stands for System Management and Allocation of Resources for Transportation. SCALE refers to the six evaluation factors – Safety, Congestion mitigation, Accessibility, Land use, and Economic development and the environment.

The key goals of SMART SCALE are:

- To promote performance in the selection of projects for the SYIP
- To provide stability to the SYIP
- To establish a project pipeline that links planning to programming

This document provides an overview of the SMART SCALE statewide prioritization process for the purposes of addressing HRTPO Guidance on SMART SCALE. Complete information on SMART SCALE may be accessed on the web at: <https://smartscale.virginia.gov/>

SMART SCALE EXCLUSIONS

The SMART SCALE process excludes the following project types and funding sources:

Project Types:

- Stand-alone studies
- Pavement and bridge rehabilitation/replacement projects
- Fully funded projects
 - Exception – Total cost expected to exceed \$1 billion, procurement to start prior to award of next round of SMART SCALE, and project was ineligible for most recent previous round of SMART SCALE due to project readiness.
- Projects for which project components or features are not contiguous, proximate, or of the same improvement type
- Projects that will replace bicycle and pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks, shared-use paths, or bike lanes that must be upgraded from substandard to standard.
- Projects that duplicate exact project components in the same location as another submitted application.

Funding Sources:

- Revenue Sharing projects
- Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia regional funds
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds
- Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funds
- Highway Safety Federal funds
- Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside funds

SMART SCALE PROJECT SCREENING

Only projects that meet a capacity or operational need identified under the following categories in the **VTrans2040 Multimodal Transportation Plan** will move forward in the SMART SCALE process:

- Corridors of Statewide Significance
- Regional Networks
- Improvements to promote Urban Development Areas
- Transportation Safety

For the most up-to-date information on VTrans2040, visit the VTrans2040 page on the website of the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment at:

www.vtrans.org/vtrans2040.asp.

SMART SCALE EVALUATION MEASURES

The legislation that resulted in SMART SCALE requires that measures used to evaluate projects be quantifiable and objective, that the analysis result in a measure of a project's benefits relative to its cost (essentially a benefit-cost analysis using the SMART SCALE factors), and that the CTB consider all modes of transportation. The law requires that the measures fall into the following five factor areas:

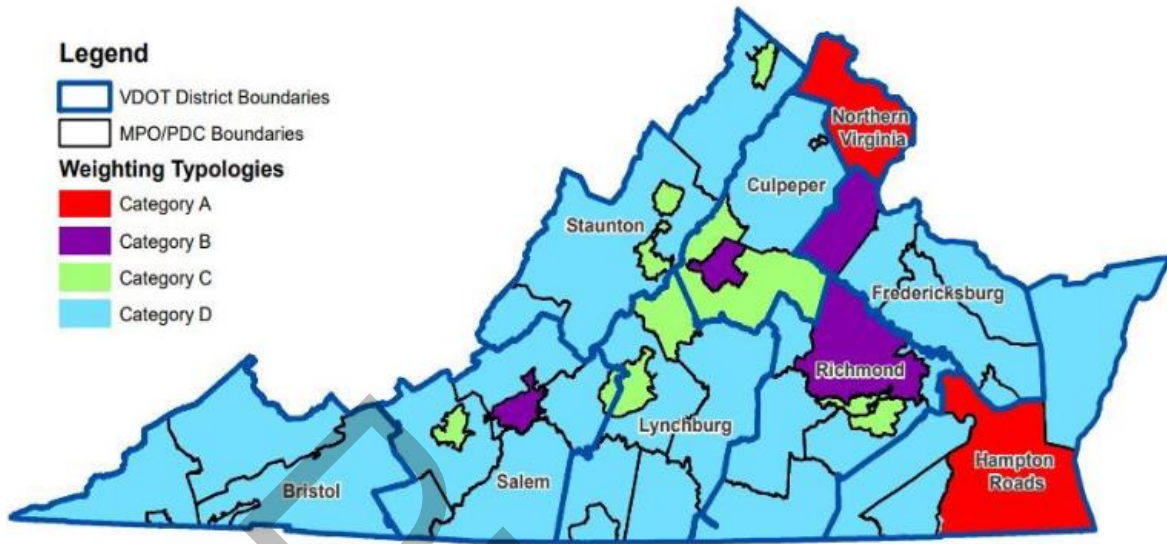
- Congestion Mitigation
- Accessibility
- Safety
- Environmental Quality
- Economic Development

For details on the measures and measure weights for each of the factors listed above, visit the SMART SCALE website at: <https://smartscale.virginia.gov/>

SMART SCALE WEIGHTING TYPOLOGIES AND FRAMEWORKS

The legislation that resulted in SMART SCALE specifies that the CTB shall weight the evaluation factors for each of the state's nine VDOT Construction Districts, assigning different weights to the factors based on the unique needs and qualities of each District. **Figure 1** depicts the SMART SCALE weighting typologies, or frameworks, for the nine construction districts. As shown in Figure 1, several of the construction districts have more than one SMART SCALE weighting typology.

Figure 1 – SMART SCALE Weighting Typologies



As shown in Figure 1, the localities within the Hampton Roads MPA – excluding Gloucester County (which is included in the Fredericksburg Construction District), the City of Franklin, and Southampton County – are in the Category A weighting framework. Localities within the VDOT Hampton Roads Construction District, but outside of the Hampton Roads MPA, plus Franklin and Southampton County in their entirety, are in the Category D weighting framework.

Table 1 shows the weights to be applied to each of the evaluation factors for each weighting framework category.

Table 1 – SMART SCALE Weighting Frameworks

Factor	Safety	Congestion	Accessibility	Economic Development	Environment
Type A	15%	45%	25%	5%	10%
Type B	20%	25%	25%	20%	10%
Type C	30%	20%	15%	25%	10%
Type D	40%	10%	10%	30%	10%

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Entities eligible to submit projects under SMART SCALE are:

- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Planning District Commissions (PDCs), and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA)
- Counties
- Cities
- Towns that maintain their own infrastructure and qualify to receive payments pursuant to §33.2-319 of the Code of Virginia
- Transit agencies that receive state operating assistance from the Mass Transit Trust Fund (as established in §58.1-638(A)(4)(b)(2) of the Code of Virginia)

Table 2 summarizes the entities eligible to submit projects under SMART SCALE by project type.

Table 2 – Eligibility to Submit Projects

Project Type	Regional Entities (MPOs, PDCs)	Local Governments (Cities, Counties, Towns)	Transit Agencies
Corridors of Statewide Significance	Yes	Yes, with a resolution of support from relevant regional entity	Yes, with a resolution of support from relevant regional entity
Regional Networks	Yes	Yes, with a resolution of support from relevant regional entity *	Yes, with a resolution of support from relevant entity
Urban Development Areas	No	Yes, with a resolution of support from relevant regional entity *	No
Safety	No	Yes, with a resolution of support from relevant regional entity *	No

* Projects within established MPO study areas that are not identified in or consistent with the regionally adopted Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) must include a resolution of support from the respective MPO Policy Board.

RELEVANT REGIONAL ENTITIES

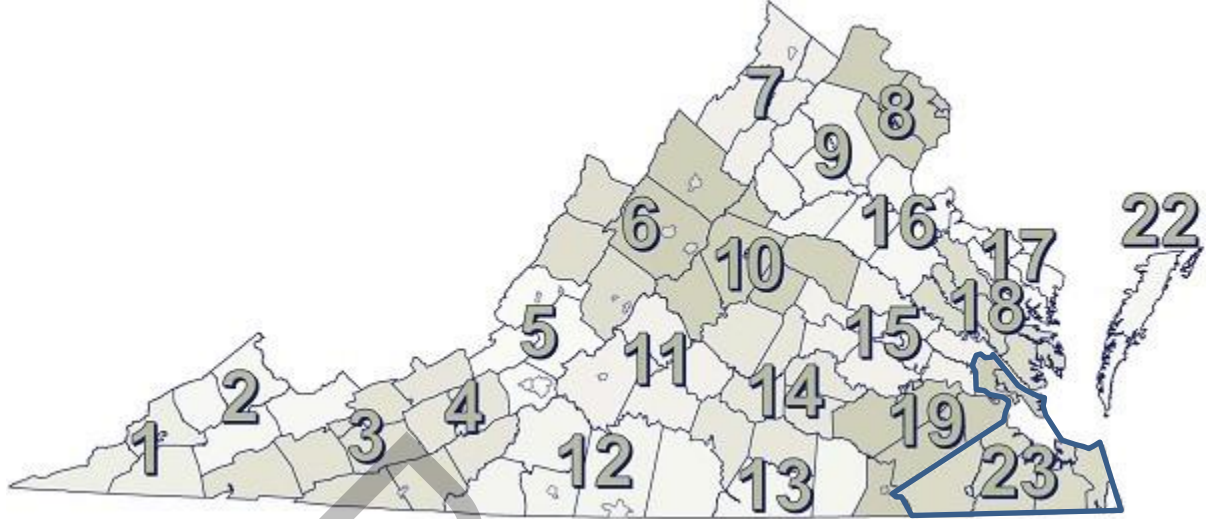
As shown in Table 2, most SMART SCALE applications must include a resolution of support from the relevant regional entity. **Table 3** identifies the relevant regional entities for localities and transit agencies within the Hampton Roads Construction District.

Table 3 – Relevant Regional Entities

Local Governments (Cities, Counties, Towns) And Transit Agencies	Relevant Regional Entity
Localities and Transit Agencies within the Hampton Roads MPA (Excluding Gloucester County)	HRTPO
Localities and Transit Agencies outside of the Hampton Roads MPA, but within Planning District 23	Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
Localities and Transit Agencies outside of Planning District 23, but within the Hampton Roads Construction District	For Eastern Shore Localities: Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission (PD 22) For Sussex, Surry, & Greensville Counties: Crater Planning District Commission (PD 19)
Gloucester County	Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (PD 18)

Figure 2 shows the Virginia Planning Districts (PDs) with the boundary of PD 23 indicated by a bold blue line.

Figure 2 – Virginia Planning Districts

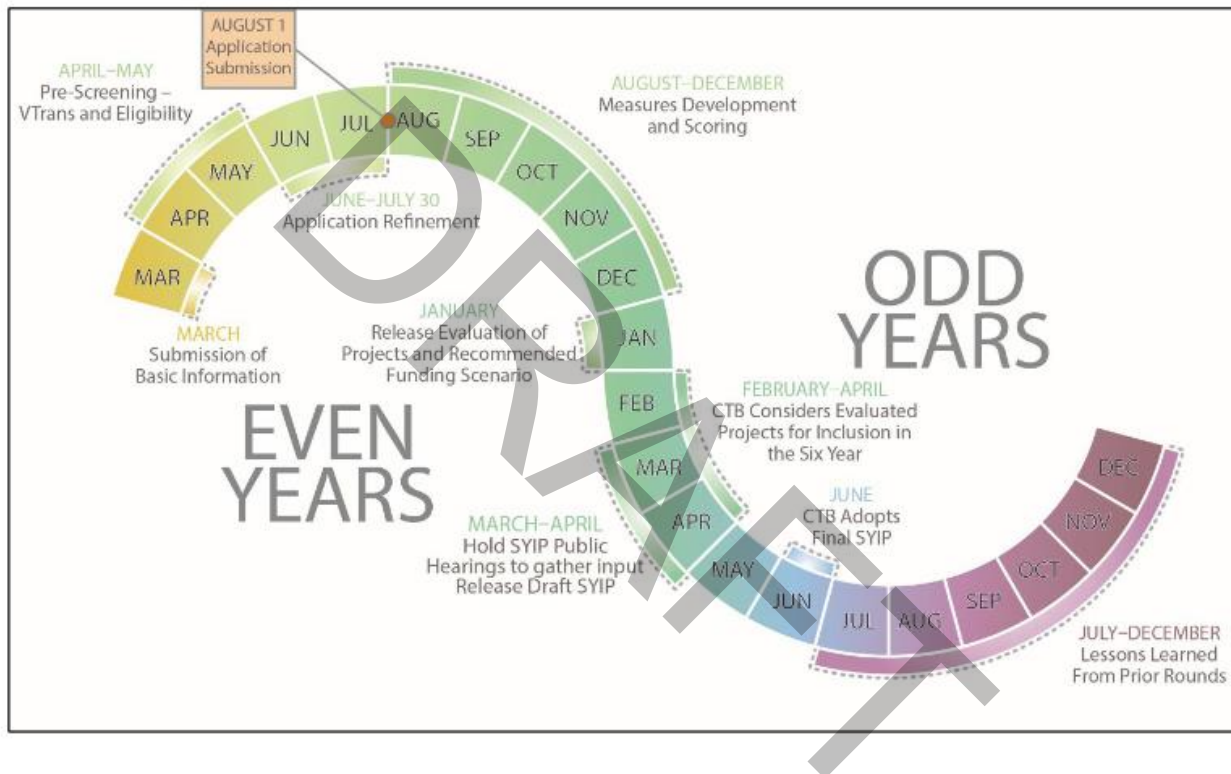


Source: Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions

SMART SCALE APPLICATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

In accordance with the SMART SCALE Technical Guide, in order to support the success of the evaluation process, project sponsors will need to coordinate with VDOT and DRPT early in the process to share information on prospective applications. This coordination phase will allow project descriptions and scopes of work, cost estimates, and potential benefits to be developed and refined and will facilitate the application and evaluation process.

Figure 3 – Anticipated SMART SCALE Biennial Cycle



SMART SCALE project applications must include the following information:

- **Scope** – At a minimum, the scope should define the limits of the project, its physical and operational characteristics, and physical and/or operational footprint.
- **Schedule** – At a minimum, the schedule should clearly define the expected process for further project development including key milestones, work activities, related activities, approvals/approval timelines. The schedule should be realistic and reflect the complexity of the project and identify durations for project phases (PE, RW, CN).

- **Cost** – At a minimum, the cost estimate should be as realistic as possible and should account for applicable risk and contingencies based on the size and complexity of the project. Projects should not be segmented to the extent that they no longer have logical termini or independent utility. Cost estimates must be escalated to the anticipated start date for future phases.
- **Leveraged Funding** – Committed funds are funds committed to cover the difference in total project cost and SMART SCALE request so the project is fully funded through construction or equivalent delivery phase. By Code, all SMART SCALE projects are required to demonstrate full funding within the six-year horizon of the Six-Year Improvement Program. Applicants are encouraged to identify other sources of funding (local, regional, proffers, other stated/federal funds) to reduce the amount of funding being requested via SMART SCALE.

It should be noted that, as part of the application process, each applicant will be asked to submit a maximum number of pre-applications and full applications based on population tiers.

Table 4 - Number of Applications based on population

Population	Pre-Applications	Full Applications
200,00 and below	4	3
200,000 - 500,000	5	4
500,000 and greater	7	6

Complete information on SMART SCALE may be accessed on the web at:
<https://smartscale.virginia.gov/>

HRTPO GUIDANCE ON SMART SCALE

This section describes the HRTPO guidance with respect to the SMART SCALE statewide prioritization process when:

1. HRTPO is the Applicant
2. HRTPO is requested to support projects submitted by Localities or Transit Agency
3. HRPDC is requested to support projects submitted by Localities or Transit Agency

WHEN HRTPO IS THE APPLICANT

As shown in Table 2, the HRTPO is an eligible applicant for projects that fall under the **Corridors of Statewide Significance (CoSS)** and **Regional Networks** project types. The HRTPO may submit projects at its discretion or at the request of another entity, such as the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC), the Virginia Port Authority (VPA), etc.

Guidance Regarding Project Submissions by the HRTPO

1. It is the prerogative of the HRTPO Board whether to apply for projects at the request of other entities. To assist in this decision, HRTPO staff will:
 - a. Review proposed projects to ensure they are consistent with the current, fiscally-constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan and the fiscally constrained Transportation Improvement Program, as applicable.
 - b. Review proposed projects with respect to SMART SCALE evaluation factors and measures.
 - c. Provide a recommendation to the HRTPO Board on each project proposed for submission by the HRTPO.
2. As required by the SMART SCALE process, the HRTPO Board will specify the priority order of the projects the HRTPO submits. To assist in this decision, HRTPO staff will:
 - a. Review HRTPO Project Prioritization scores for each proposed project.
 - b. Review proposed projects with respect to SMART SCALE evaluation factors and measures.
 - c. Provide a recommendation to the HRTPO Board on the priority order for projects proposed for submission by the HRTPO.

WHEN HRTPO IS REQUESTED TO SUPPORT THE APPLICATION OF A LOCALITY OR TRANSIT AGENCY

As shown in Table 2, localities and transit agencies that wish to submit projects for SMART SCALE evaluation must obtain a resolution of support from the relevant regional entity. Table 3 identifies the relevant regional entities for the Hampton Roads Construction District.

Guidance Regarding Project Submissions by Localities and Transit Agencies

1. In response to a request for HRTPO support of project applications, HRTPO staff will review the proposed projects to ensure they are consistent with the current, fiscally constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the fiscally-constrained Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), as applicable.
2. For projects found to be consistent with the fiscally-constrained LRTP and fiscally constrained TIP, an HRTPO resolution of support will be provided to the Applicant. If the applicant submits more than one project, the resolution will specify each project supported by the HRTPO.
3. It is the responsibility of the Locality or Transit Agency to specify the priority order of the projects they submit for evaluation under SMART SCALE.

WHEN HRPDC IS REQUESTED TO SUPPORT THE APPLICATION OF A LOCALITY OR TRANSIT AGENCY

As shown in Table 3, for localities and transit agencies outside of the Hampton Roads MPA, but within Planning District 23, the relevant regional entity is the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC).

Guidance Regarding Project Submissions by Localities and Transit Agencies

1. In response to a request for HRPDC support of project applications, HRTPO staff will review the proposed projects to ensure they are consistent with the current, fiscally constrained HRTPO Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), fiscally-constrained Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and/or the Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan (RLRTP), as applicable.
2. For projects found to be consistent with the fiscally-constrained LRTP, fiscally constrained TIP, and/or RL RTP, an HRPDC resolution of support will be provided to the Applicant. If the applicant submits more than one project, the resolution will specify each project supported by the HRPDC.
3. It is the responsibility of the Locality or Transit Agency to specify the priority order of the projects they submit for evaluation under SMART SCALE.

Appendix

Other changes to the SMARTSCALE Program include:

- The congestion weighting factor will be calculated based on a 7-year timeline.
- To use a forward-looking economic development factor, the current ED-1 will be replaced with VEDP provided factors. These factors will consider the economic development potential of sites impacted by the applicant project.
- Refined the High-Priority Projects Program Eligibility.
 - Clarify CTB policy to ensure that projects are of statewide significance.
 - Distribution of all HPP program funds based on statewide rankings of SMARTSCALE Scores

The Virginia SMART SCALE Technical Guide can be found at the following location:

https://smartscale.virginia.gov/media/smartscale/documents/508_R6_Technical-Guide_FINAL_FINAL_acc043024_PM.pdf