

Frequently Asked Questions On the next National Capital Region Transportation Plan – Visualize 2050

1. When will the plan be updated? Why is it updated on this schedule?

- The TPB plans to adopt an updated National Capital Region Transportation Plan (NCRTP) in June 2025. The new plan will be called Visualize 2050.
- The plan is being updated ahead of its federally required quadrennial schedule of 2026 for two primary reasons:
 - TPB Resolution R19-2021 called for the plan to be updated sooner than 2026, with a target date of 2024.
 - To maintain a required 20-year horizon beyond 2025, the TPB needs to update the plan to include a year 2050 planning horizon. (Doing so was not possible for the 2022 plan as the 2050 Cooperative Forecasts were not complete for that plan cycle).
- The TPB will reviewed detailed work activities for the update at its January 2023 meeting.

2. What is different about this update? Isn't the plan updated on a regular basis anyway?

- The TPB approved its current plan and TIP on June 15, 2022. The federal agencies approved the conformity determination for the plan and TIP on August 25, 2022. The plan and TIP approved in 2022 were based on project submissions that were approved by the TPB in Resolution R19-2021 in June 2021 for inclusion in the plan and TIP analysis. As part of Resolution R19-2021, the TPB further directed its staff to initiate an update to the 2022 plan with a target completion date of 2024 and said that the updated Plan “will be based on the concept of ‘zero-based budgeting’ where all projects, including those currently included in the Plan, must be resubmitted for consideration in such Plan.” The completion date was later extended for six months to June 2025.

3. What is the “zero-based budgeting” approach to be used for Visualize 2050?

- Using a zero-based budgeting approach means that in 2023 the TPB member agencies will re-examine all projects, programs, and policies from the current NCRTP (Visualize 2045) and determine if those will be resubmitted for inclusion in the Visualize 2050 Plan and FY2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- The intent of this approach is to initiate a re-examination of the projects previously selected for implementation by the member agencies to determine if they reflect the findings from various scenario studies conducted by the TPB and would be better at advancing the TPB's goals and priorities. Factors, including the changing prospects for travel in the future as a result of the pandemic related disruptions and the urgency to address the impacts of climate change by reducing on-road greenhouse gas emissions, should be considered as part of this re-examination.
- Projects in the plan are in various stages of project development. Those that are currently funded and/or under construction are carried in the plan until they are completed and are far enough along where the likelihood of change is small. There are also projects for which funding is reasonably expected to be available, yet no funding has been committed or spent. A zero-based budgeting approach will help focus efforts on projects that are in a developmental stage where the TPB goals and priorities can be used to influence the scope of such projects, including dropping them from further consideration if they do not meet TPB goals and objectives.

4. What projects are included in the agencies' review under the "zero based budgeting" approach?

- All currently approved projects from the financially constrained element of Visualize 2045 will be reviewed, and all data for all projects must be re-entered into the TPB's database.
 - TPB Resolution, R19-2022, which called for a "zero-based budgeting" approach to update projects, also stated that "that projects currently under construction or currently funded with federal, state, regional, local or private funds shall be exempt from such (re-examination) requirement."
 - Consistent with TPB Resolution R19-2021, step one of the zero based budgeting approach is to determine which projects are under construction or currently funded and those that are not. The set of projects under construction OR have funding would be exempt from TPB member agencies re-examining the decision to implement these projects. This does not preclude the TPB member agency from a re-examination and subsequent change to the project. Member agencies will be asked to re-examine the need, scope, and plans to implement the remaining projects that are not under construction and have no funds expended and to propose changes as appropriate.
 - Projects that are unfunded are not exempt and require re-examination and re-submission.

5. How will the TPB consider how projects respond to the TPB policy priorities and summary of TPB's scenario studies?

- TPB members, and the transit and highway agencies they represent, submit projects to the TPB's NC RTP. Many of these projects also include environmental, bicycle, and pedestrian components, and more. Each project submission requires a project description form containing policy and technical questions and the corresponding agency's responses. The agency submitting the project for inclusion in Visualize 2050 can use a variety of supporting studies, analysis, and technically reasonable assumptions in responding to the policy questions. TPB staff reviews all the responses and works with the agency staff to seek clarifications/corrections as warranted. Agencies are welcome, but are not required, to submit data or analysis to support the comment. For every project in the current approved plan, the responses to these questions are reported in the [Regional Policy Alignment documentation](#).

6. In the Regional Policy Alignment documentation (mentioned previously) for the projects in the 2022 update, it suggested that some roadway capacity adding projects reduce rather than increase GHG. How is this possible? How are these responses developed?

- As noted previously, each project submission requires a project description document that includes a series of policy and technical questions and agency responses that are reported in the Regional Policy Alignment documentation. The agency submitting the project for inclusion in Visualize 2050 can use a variety of supporting studies, analysis, and technically reasonable assumptions in responding to the policy questions.

- Emissions of pollutants, including greenhouse gases, have a complex relationship with vehicles, vehicle occupancy, and the operating conditions of the vehicles. As such, it would be incorrect to generalize that all roadway capacity adding projects will increase emissions. For example, vehicles operating at low/congested speeds emits higher number of certain pollutants; they also consume more fossil fuel, which results in higher levels of GHG emissions. Improvements to relieve such congested travel can help to reduce emissions. Please view the TPB Summary of Scenario Studies for examples on this topic.
- The following resources provide more information about the projects in the currently approved plan:
 - [The Project InfoTrak database](#): the TPB’s online publicly available database of all project records. Note that a single project may have numerous associated records.
 - [The Regional Policy Documentation for all projects in the Visualize 2045 update](#): webpage that includes a document for each state-level agency, member counties, and the City of Alexandria. Detailed information about how each project advances the TPB policy priorities is provided.
 - [Visualize 2045 Update, Appendix B](#); and the [FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program](#): documents providing detailed project information.

7. Will the public have an opportunity to comment during the Zero-Based Budgeting Approach re-examination?

- Yes, the public can comment in step one of the zero-based budgeting process, which will involve the currently approved list of Visualize 2045 plan projects. The list of projects published and made available to the public will include projects that are under construction or have funding and projects that are not underway or are yet to be funded. It must be noted that an agency’s ability to make changes to a project that is under construction or already funded may be limited.
- Members of the public are encouraged to send comments directly to the jurisdiction or agency responsible for planning, programming, and implementing each project. Comments should indicate if the commenter supports or does not support the project’s inclusion in the plan, or if the commenter proposes any changes to the project.
- Members of the public can also direct comments to the TPB. Please visit the Visualize 2045 Get Involved Page or the TPB Comment Page (look for updates in 2023) for guidance on resources to support commenting. Since the TPB does not make project level decisions, these comments will be received by the TPB and directed to the appropriate member agency for consideration.

8. Do we expect the final 2050 plan and mix of projects to be very different from the current plan?

- The focus of the new plan will be on the projects that are not under construction or already funded (the non-exempt list), while not precluding changes to projects that are funded yet not under construction. The extent and nature of changes to the project mix will depend on how far the agency is with project implementation.
- The TPB is providing a comprehensive list of resources to inform decisionmakers and agency representatives as they decide on the projects to implement – resources that describe the transportation system’s performance under the current plan (Visualize 2045), the region’s goals around mobility, accessibility, equity, and sustainability, as well as the results of scenario studies that evaluated alternative strategies to improve the transportation system.

Additionally for this Plan update, TPB member agencies are being provided considerably more time to review and select projects they submit for inclusion in Visualize 2050.

- Given the length of time it takes for an agency to take a project from its concept stage to implementation and the associated challenges to fully fund the project before it can be added to the TPB's long range plan, regular updates of the plan do not include many new projects. Many of the projects in the current NCRTP, Visualize 2045, are either under construction OR have already expended funds towards implementing the projects.