

### TRANSPORTATION ACHIEVEMENT AWARD – PLANNING

## Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, SMART SCALE: Funding the Right Transportation Projects in Virginia



**SMART  
SCALE**

*Funding the Right  
Transportation Projects  
in Virginia*

The Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI), the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), have received a 2023 Transportation Achievement Award in the Planning Category for their **SMART SCALE: Funding the Right Transportation Projects in Virginia** initiative. The

Transportation Achievement Awards recognize excellence in the advancement of transportation to meet human needs, by entities concerned with transportation, such as governmental agencies, Tribes, legislative bodies, consulting firms, industry partners, and other organizations. Awards are presented in five categories: Complete Streets, TSMO, Safety, Planning, and Traffic Engineering.

SMART SCALE is a program that was established by the Virginia General Assembly in 2014 to fund transportation projects in Virginia. The original legislation directed Virginia's Commonwealth Transportation board (CTB) to develop and implement an objective, quantifiable, and transparent process for the allocation of state and federal construction funds. The resulting process scored project applications based on six factor areas: safety, congestion mitigation, accessibility, land use, environmental quality, and economic development. The overall project score is then divided by the funding requested in the application and projects are ranked based on the cost-weighted score. Funded projects are incorporated into the Virginia Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Eligible projects include highway improvements, transit and rail expansion projects, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and transportation demand management projects that meet one or more needs identified in Virginia's Transportation Plan, VTrans.

SMART SCALE incorporates traffic engineering, planning, and safety. Congestion mitigation and safety are two of the scoring factors considered as part of SMART SCALE, but SMART SCALE can probably best be thought of as a program that has changed transportation planning within Virginia. It has provided a viable funding opportunity for various transportation projects. Many transportation planning projects (e.g., intersection studies, corridor studies, transit master plans) consider SMART SCALE eligibility criteria and factor weights during project development to maximize the chances of the recommend alternative receiving funding.

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## 2023 Excellence in Transportation Awards

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Since its inception, SMART SCALE has approved funding for \$4.5 billion of transportation projects with a draft funding recommendation for an additional \$1.5 billion currently under review. SMART SCALE has completely transformed the way that transportation practitioners seek funding for projects in Virginia over the past eight years.

SMART SCALE considers six different factors when scoring project applications: safety, congestion mitigation, accessibility, land use, environmental quality, and economic development. Within each factor area, the SMART SCALE teams have either taken established methodologies and created new tools to increase the efficiency of scoring or have created new methodologies and tools to score projects.

SMART SCALE has funded a variety of transportation projects over the past eight years, including major widening projects, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, new Park & Ride lots, new roadways, safety improvements, innovative intersections, and new transit routes. SMART SCALE promotes all modes of transportation and has provided a viable funding stream for cities, towns, counties, and transportation agencies to fund projects that address their most pressing transportation needs.

This multi-faceted program started as a bill that aimed to change the way transportation projects were funded in Virginia. Today, the program continues to push the boundaries of innovation and collaboration to make sure that Virginia is spending taxpayer dollars on the best transportation projects.

Congratulations to the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIP), the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). Read more about SMART SCALE [here](#).