

LVTS PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

LVTS criteria are documented in its long range transportation plan entitled *Lehigh Valley Surface Transportation Plan 2007 – 2030*. LVTS does not have a “scoring” system per se except where noted below. The various kinds of projects that are typically proposed and how they are evaluated follows.

Projects proposed with a justification of **congestion mitigation** must be contained within the LVTS congestion management Program (CMP) in order to be considered. The CMP is developed using the LVPC’s regional travel forecast model and there are a number of screens the projects go through before being included in the CMP. First, projects must be at least a mile long, have an average level-of-service of “D” or worse, and not have had publicly-funded improvements in the last 20 years. Once a project list is developed using that screen, projects are then prioritized using a weighted rating system that includes future level-of-service, future traffic volume, current crash rate as compared to the statewide crash rate for that type of facility, and length of the corridor. The points system is as follows:

<u>Future Level of Service</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>2000/2030 Ave. Daily Traffic</u>	<u>Points</u>
F	10	>40,000	8
E	7	30,000 – 39,999	6
D	4	20,000 – 29,999	4
		<20,000	2

<u>Crash Rate over State Ave</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Distance</u>	<u>Points</u>
>2.5 times	6	>4 miles	5
1.50 – 2.50 times	4	3.00 – 3.99 miles	4
1.00 – 1.49 times	2	2.00 – 2.99 miles	3
		1.00 – 1.99 miles	2

In an effort to strengthen the land use/transportation infrastructure investments link, LVTS maintains a policy that congestion problems outside the area recommended for urban development in the LVPC’s regional comprehensive plan (adopted by both counties) will NOT be addressed using Federal or state money available to the MPO.

Proposed **safety** projects are evaluated using PennDOT safety data and comparing crash rates against statewide crash rates for highways with similar characteristics (e.g. access control, divided, aadt, urban/rural setting). While the LVTS long range plan is project-specific in its safety analysis, there is no requirement that a safety project must be included in that analysis in order to be funded. The reason no such requirement exists is that the latest safety data should be used in the documentation for a proposed project, while the long range plan is updated every four years and will not always reflect the latest safety data. Therefore, in order to be considered for funding, a project must have a crash rate greater than the statewide average for that type facility. Also, the project is measured against the PennDOT District 5 list of safety concerns, first developed in 2006 and updated on a regular basis.

Proposed **air quality** projects that want to use congestion mitigation/air quality (CMAQ) funds must go through an air quality test showing that emissions of volatile organic compounds or oxides of nitrogen are reduced as a result of the implementation of that project. This is done using either the LVPC’s regional travel model or PAQONE, a statewide model used to determine the air quality impacts of projects not able to be modeled in the regional travel model.

Proposed **bridge** projects must have a sufficiency rating below 80 in order to be eligible for rehabilitation and below 50 in order to be eligible for replacement. If these criteria are not met, the bridge is not eligible for state or Federal critical bridge funds. It has been LVTS practice to rely on

PennDOT District 5 to develop bridge priorities. Highest priority is given to closed bridges, posted bridges, and bridges that are structurally deficient.

Maintenance projects are generally proposed and prioritized by PennDOT District 5. As is the case with bridges, LVTS defers to PennDOT's expertise on issues like life-cycle costing and maintenance cycles when addressing these projects.

Proposed projects of types other than those mentioned above are evaluated against LVTS goals and policies documented in the long range plan. Those goals and policies are consistent with the regional comprehensive plan. The following are relevant policies with regard to project selection:

Plan Consistency- Projects must comply with the transportation goals and policies of the LVTS and *Comprehensive Plan The Lehigh Valley...2030* adopted by Lehigh and Northampton Counties in June 2005.

Highest priority shall be assigned to those projects that are essential for safety, maintenance of the transportation system, and/or relief of congestion.

Give high priority to projects that upgrade unsafe roads and intersections, rehabilitate or replace deficient bridges, and upgrade existing highways that are deficient.

Support highway capacity improvements only in areas designated for urban development in the *Comprehensive Plan The Lehigh Valley...2030*.

New/Expanded Facilities – Facilities involving capacity improvements must be justified primarily on the basis of current or future congestion or safety problems. Additional factors such as access improvement and economic development may be given consideration to the degree that they support the goals and policies of *Comprehensive Plan The Lehigh Valley...2030* and that the financial resources are available.

Improvements to existing highways at current locations are generally preferred over relocations and bypasses. Improvement of existing interchanges on Route 22, I-78, the Pennsylvania Turnpike and Route 33 to resolve major safety and capacity problems will be supported if sufficient funds are available. Interchanges at new locations are not recommended unless there is a compelling and well documented need that cannot be met by upgrading an existing interchange.

Travel demand on existing facilities should be met to the greatest degree possible by programming low cost safety and mobility improvements.

Major highway and interchange projects should not be located in areas designated for natural features or agricultural preservation in *Comprehensive Plan The Lehigh Valley...2030*.

These policies indicate the types of projects LVTS is willing and not willing to fund. LVTS applies the policies in its long range plan noted above and also considers potential impacts to land use and the natural and built environments, key issues in the regional comprehensive plan.