

FREIGHT MOBILITY STRATEGIC INVESTMENT BOARD

SIX-YEAR INVESTMENT PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

May 19, 2025 • 1:00 – 2:00pm • Microsoft Teams

Attendance

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Johan Hellman, Chair
Matthew Colvin, Vice Chair
John McCarthy
Jon Snyder
Cory Wright

Alternate:
Ben Wick

Not Present:
Anne McEnery-Ogle

Jason Biggs, Ex-Officio

FMSIB STAFF

Brandy DeLange, Executive Director
Joy Dopita, Executive Assistant
Fred Wenhardt, Transportation Planning Specialist

GUESTS

Jason Beloso, WSDOT

Meeting Convenes

Chair Hellman convened the third meeting of the Six-Year Investment Program Committee at 1:00 p.m. There were six voting committee members present.

Approval of Six-Year Investment Committee Meeting Minutes

Mr. Snyder moved to approve the minutes from the Six-Year Investment Program Committee meeting on April 21, 2025. *Commissioner McCarthy* seconded.

MOTION CARRIED

Six-Year Investment Program Regional Distribution of Funding Recommendations

Director DeLange kicked off the third meeting of the Six-Year Investment Program Committee and recapped the previous meetings, which included:

1. Reviewed survey results from applicants which informed updates to scoring criteria
2. Revised scoring criteria and point distribution

3. Updated outreach and engagement strategies based off feedback from ports, cities, counties, and private industry
4. Refined point distributions based on recommendations

Mr. Wenhardt presented three Regional Distribution of Funding recommendation options:

Option 1 – Update Regions and Funding Distribution:

- 60% of funding allocated to highest-priority freight projects statewide
- Remaining 40% split evenly across four regions (Puget Sound, Western WA, Central WA, Eastern WA)
- Increased support for underrepresented regions and tribes
- Would require codification in Washington Administrative Code (WAC)
- Could limit flexibility in funding high-priority projects outside the designated regions

Option 2 – Adopt WAC to align with RCW 47.06A.020:

- Reflects vague RCW language requiring regional distribution without fixed formulas
- Offers flexibility to adapt to changing regional needs over time

Option 3 – No change:

- Continue using current model with no change to distribution formula or WAC
- Allocate funds based purely on project merit and impact

Mr. Snyder questioned the need to include a regional distribution criterion without evidence that such distribution is currently lacking. He argued that a geographic distribution rule might not be necessary if current processes were already producing equitable outcomes across the state.

Chair Hellman clarified that *Mr. Snyder* supports more flexibility and less prescriptive approaches in the WAC.

Mr. Snyder confirmed this, leaning toward Option 3 unless data showed a problem with regional equity.

Mr. Colvin disagreed on imposing regional distribution quotas prematurely. He warned that arbitrary distribution (like a 60/40 split) could lead to inefficiency and diminish project value, especially given unpredictable funding requests from different areas.

Commissioner Wright appreciated distinguishing Central Washington as a unique region and opposed strict allocation rules. He emphasized the importance of integrating local road infrastructure (collectors, not just arterials) to fully support freight movement. He suggested a balance between structured planning and flexibility.

Councilman Wick offered historical context: the 60/40 split had been used by the Board in past WAC versions and was considered during the 2024 recommendations. He further advocated for guardrails to prevent all funding from going to one region, without being overly prescriptive and suggested using Board policy rather than WAC changes to ensure balance.

Mr. Colvin followed up on Councilman Wick's ideas and supported limits instead of mandates, e.g., “no region may receive more than 60–70%” of funds and preferred flexible language that ensures balance but doesn’t restrict allocation to high-need projects.

Commissioner McCarthy questioned the accuracy of past funding charts and requested clarification of what funding years were represented and emphasized the importance of understanding historical distributions and aligning them with recent recommendations.

Mr. Wenhardt explained that the charts refer to 2025–2031, not the current biennium, and that the funding shown reflects projections from the technical memo for the Six-Year Investment Plan.

Six-Year Investment Program Project Eligibility Criteria Recommendations

Mr. Wenhardt outlined potential modifications to Project Eligibility Criteria:

Option 1 – Maintain existing targets of recommended funding distribution:

- Clarify definitions of project categories with examples on the application
- Better define eligibility for maintenance (must show freight benefit)
- Rename “Freight Systems of the Future” to “Innovative Freight Solutions” and expand scope to encourage broader pool of applicants

Option 2 – No change:

- The 25-27 biennium was the first iteration of the Six-Year Investment Program, and there was limited data on the diversity of project applications. Keep existing eligibility criteria consistent for the next application cycle.

Councilman Wick voiced his support for renaming and redefining categories. He noted that most applications were expansion projects and encouraged more education to promote underused categories like preservation and Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO).

Commissioner McCarthy raised a concern about applicants potentially gaming the system by selecting categories they think would be more successful, asking if applicants chose their project category.

Mr. Wenhardt clarified that yes, applicants selected their own category, and misidentification occurs (intentionally or not) but staff validated all entries. Since targets are not requirements, category choice only influences how the board evaluates balance, not who gets disqualified.

Commissioner Wright agreed with preservation importance but warned against projects simply shaped to fit freight narratives for funding and stressed the need for projects to show broader regional freight impacts, not just local roadwork. He suggested a seeding model where local governments must show commitment or funding before state dollars are allocated.

Councilman Wick highlighted the importance of keeping preservation distinct from replacement. He drew on federal definitions to reinforce that preservation aimed to maintain existing assets, not expand them, and tended to be more cost-effective. He also noted a lack of preservation applications, which may indicate a need to shift local thinking or outreach.

Commissioner Wright agreed with the preservation value but stressed local economic accountability. He argued that localities must demonstrate their contribution locally (e.g., through road levies), especially for small-scope preservation projects.

The Committee leaned toward a hybrid model of Options 2 and 3 for the Regional Distribution of Funding recommendations, with no changes in WAC but regional distribution guidance developed for future boards.

The Committee supported Option 1 under Project Eligibility Criteria recommendations which would revise project application criteria to better reflect current needs (e.g., clearer definitions, more inclusive categories) and incorporating Commissioner McCarthy's suggestion of allowing applicants to select multiple project purposes instead of being restricted to one.

Staff will draft language and criteria for future Boards that capture this flexibility.

Next Six-Year Investment Program Committee Meetings

The Six-Year Investment Program Committee is scheduled to meet again on June 3 and will present its findings at the next FMSIB Workshop and Board Meeting scheduled for June 12 and 13, respectively.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm