

paragraph (a) of this section shall be a prerequisite to approval of an FFGA.

(2) For funding purposes, collection of the “before” data, collection of the “after” data, and the development and reporting of findings are eligible parts of the proposed project.

(3) FTA may condition receipt of funding provided for the project in the FFGA upon satisfactory submission of the report required under this section.

**Subpart C—Small Starts**

**§611.301 Small Starts eligibility.**

(a) To be eligible for a project development grant under this part for a new fixed guideway, an extension to a fixed guideway, or a corridor-based bus rapid transit system, a project must:

(1) Be a Small Starts project as defined in §. 611.105; and

(2) Be approved into project development by FTA pursuant to §611.309.

(b) To be eligible for a construction grant under this part for a new fixed guideway, an extension to a fixed guideway, or a corridor-based bus rapid system, a project must:

(1) Be a Small Starts project as defined in §611.105;

(2) Receive a “medium” or better rating on project justification pursuant to §611.303;

(3) Receive a “medium” or better rating on local financial commitment pursuant to Sec. 611.305; and

(4) Meet the other requirements of 49 U.S.C. 5309.

**§611.303 Small Starts project justification criteria.**

(a) To perform the statutorily required evaluations and assign ratings for project justification, FTA will evaluate information developed locally through the planning, NEPA and project development processes.

(1) The method used by FTA to evaluate and rate projects will be a multiple measure approach by which the merits of candidate projects will be evaluated in terms of each of the criteria specified by this section.

(2) The measures for these criteria are specified in Appendix A and elaborated on in policy guidance. This policy guidance, which is subject to a public comment period, is issued periodically

by FTA whenever significant changes are proposed, but not less frequently than every two years, as required by 49 U.S.C. 5309(g)(5).

(3) The measures will be applied to projects defined by project sponsors that are proposed to FTA for Small Starts funding.

(4) The ratings for each of the criteria in §611.303(b)(1) through (6) will be expressed in terms of descriptive indicators, as follows: “high,” “medium-high,” “medium,” “medium-low,” or “low.”

(b) The project justification criteria are as follows:

(1) Cost-effectiveness, as measured by cost per rider.

(2) Economic development effects.

(3) Existing land use.

(4) Mobility improvements.

(5) Environmental benefits.

(6) Congestion relief.

(c) In evaluating proposed Small Starts projects under these criteria:

(1) As a candidate project proceeds through project development, a greater level of commitment will be expected with respect to transit supportive land use plans and policies and the project sponsor’s technical capacity to implement the project.

(2) For any criteria under paragraph (b) of this section that use incremental measures, the point for comparison will be the no-build alternative.

(d) FTA may amend the measures for these project justification criteria. Any such amendment will be included in policy guidance and subject to a public comment process.

(e) From time to time FTA may publish through policy guidance standards based on characteristics of projects and/or corridors to be served. If a proposed project can meet the established standards, FTA may assign an automatic rating on one or more of the project justification criteria outlined in this section.

(f) The individual ratings for each of the criteria described in this section will be combined into a summary project justification rating of “high,” “medium-high,” “medium,” “medium-low,” or “low” through a process that gives comparable, but not necessarily equal, weight to each criterion. The

process by which the project justification rating will be developed, including the assigned weights, will be described in policy guidance.

**§ 611.305 Small Starts local financial commitment criteria.**

In order to approve a grant under 49 U.S.C. 5309 for a Small Starts project, FTA must find that the proposed project is supported by an acceptable degree of local financial commitment, as required by 49 U.S.C. 5309(h)(3)(c). The local financial commitment to a proposed project will be evaluated according to the following measures:

(a) The proposed share of the project's capital costs to be funded from sources other than Small Starts funds, including both the non-Small Starts match required by Federal law and any additional state, local, or other Federal capital funding (known as "overmatch");

(b) The current capital and operating financial condition of the project sponsor;

(c) The commitment of capital and operating funds for the project and the entire transit system including consideration of private contributions; and

(d) The accuracy and reliability of the capital and operating costs and revenue estimates and the financial capacity of the project sponsor.

(e) From time to time FTA may publish through policy guidance standards based on characteristics of projects and/or the corridors to be served. If a proposed project can meet the established standards, FTA may assign an automatic rating on one or more of the local financial commitment criteria outlined in this section.

(f) FTA may amend the measures for these local financial commitment criteria. Any such amendment will be included in policy guidance and subject to a public comment process.

(g) As a candidate project proceeds through project development, a greater level of local financial commitment will be expected.

(h) For each proposed project, ratings for paragraphs (a) through (d) of this section will be reported in terms of descriptive indicators, as follows: "high," "medium-high," "medium," "medium-low," or "low." For paragraph (a) of

this section, the percentage of Small Starts funding sought from 49 U.S.C. 5309 will be rated and used to develop the summary local financial commitment rating, but only if it improves the rating and not if it worsens the rating.

(i) The ratings for each measure described in this section will be combined into a summary local financial commitment rating of "high," "medium-high," "medium," "medium-low," or "low." The process by which the summary local financial commitment rating will be developed, including the assigned weights to each of the measures, will be described in policy guidance.

**§ 611.307 Overall Small Starts project ratings.**

(a) The summary ratings developed for project justification and local financial commitment (§§ 611.303(f) and 611.305(i)) will form the basis for the overall rating for each project.

(b) FTA will assign overall project ratings to each proposed project of "high," "medium-high," "medium," "medium-low," or "low," as required by 49 U.S.C. 5309(e)(8).

(1) These ratings will indicate the overall merit of a proposed Small Starts project at the time of evaluation.

(2) Ratings for individual projects will be developed prior to an EGA.

(c) These ratings will be used to:

(1) Approve or deny projects for EGAs; and

(2) Support annual funding recommendations to Congress in the *Annual Report on Funding Recommendations* required by 49 U.S.C. 5309(k)(1).

(d) FTA will assign overall ratings for proposed Small Starts projects by averaging the summary ratings for project justification and local financial commitment. When the average of these ratings is unclear (e.g., summary project justification rating of "medium-high" and summary local financial commitment rating of "medium"), FTA will round up the overall rating to the higher rating except in the following circumstances:

(1) A "medium" overall rating requires a rating of at least "medium" on both project justification and local financial commitment.