

MEMO

To: Jeff Richardson, Albemarle County Executive
Eric Dahl, Fluvanna County Administrator
Cathy Schafrik, Greene County Administrator
Christian Goodwin, Louisa County Administrator
Candy McGarry, Nelson County Administrator
From: Christine Jacobs, TJPDC, Executive Director
Date: July 15, 2025
Re: SMART SCALE Area Type Change - Rural

Purpose:

To provide information in consideration of changing the TJPDC non-MPO Area Type from “C” to “D” for the evaluation of SMART SCALE applications.

Background:

SMART SCALE is a statewide program used to evaluate potential transportation projects for state funds through the District Grant Program and the High Priority Project Program. Scoring is based on key factors to include:

- Congestion Reduction (Mitigation)
- Safety
- Accessibility
- Environmental Quality
- Economic Development, and
- Land Use

In recognition of the diverse range of physical landscapes, transportation needs, and local priorities across the Commonwealth, projects are evaluated according to an assigned “Area Type” determined by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), acting through the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI). The four Area Types (A through D) identify how each of the above factors are weighted in the SMART SCALE scoring process.

Area Types are assigned at the PDC (Planning District Commission) and MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) levels for rural and urban areas respectively. Area Types are not assigned at the individual jurisdiction level, so a change in area type would affect all counties within the PDC. The Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization’s (CA-MPO) area is identified as Type “B” and is not included in this discussion for consideration for change.

The rural portions of the TJPDC are identified as Type “C”, and as such, the Type “C” factor weights are applied when evaluating SMART SCALE projects submitted within the rural areas.

Discussion:

Following the results of Round VI of SMART SCALE, the TJPDC and VDOT began discussing the Commonwealth's area types and their associated factor weights and the influence of area types on the scores of the most recently submitted projects. Additionally, it was noted that the TJPDC region was unique in its rural area's Type "C" designation compared to most of the state's comparable planning areas.

According to a scoring scenario comparison prepared by VDOT staff (linked below), the TJPDC is the only rural area categorized as Area Type "C". All other PDCs with rural areas are categorized as Area Type "D", in which the highest weighted factor is safety. This triggered an analysis of how the different area type designations could/would have affected the outcomes of the SMART SCALE scores on the previous three (3) rounds of the program.

A VDOT analysis of three SMART SCALE rounds (linked below) illustrated that, with a few exceptions, projects within the TJPDC's rural area would have received higher scores and been ranked more competitively if the TJPDC were categorized as Area Type "D" instead of Area Type "C". The documents linked below (and attached) show the full analysis.

1. *Attachment A: VDOT SMART SCALE Area Type Weighting Comparisons*
2. *Attachment B: VDOT SMART SCALE Scoring Scenario Comparisons*

Based on the analysis, the TJPDC staff is recommending that the TJPDC Commission consider a request to change the non-MPO areas from Area Type "C" to Area Type "D." A change in Area Type designation will require action from the TJPDC Commission and the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) before the start of the next round of SMART SCALE (February 2026).

In advance of presenting the topic to the TJPDC Commission, staff presented the analysis to the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) comprised of staff from each of the jurisdictions for an in-depth discussion on the impacts of an area type change. In their June 17, 2025, meeting, RTAC voted unanimously to recommend to the TJPDC Commission that they submit a request to the CTB to change the PDC's non-MPO Area Type from "C" to "D." This recommendation will be presented to the TJPDC Commission in their August 7, 2025 meeting as an informational item, with the intention to bring it back before them in their September 4, 2025 meeting for action. Should the commission decide to change the rural area's type, it would be forwarded to the CTB in their October meeting for consideration.

Requested Action:

TJPDC staff are forwarding this memo and the associated *VDOT SMART SCALE Area Type Weighting Comparisons* and *VDOT SMART SCALE Scoring Scenario Comparisons* to leadership in each of our rural areas to ensure that your jurisdictions are informed and supportive of the recommendation prior to the TJPDC Commission's action. I would encourage you all to read the attached VDOT documents and forward them on to any additional staff members not listed below. While no official action is required on the individual jurisdictions' governing boards to request the change, the TJPDC staff would like to ensure that there is no opposition to the requested change before moving forward. The TJPDC staff are happy to make themselves available to you to discuss and answer any questions that you might have. Once you have had a chance to review, please reach out if you would like to schedule time to discuss. If we do not hear from you or someone on your team before the Commission's

September 4th meeting, we will move forward with recommending that the Commission take action to request a change the Area Type to "D."

Attachments:

VDOT SMART SCALE Area Type Weighting Comparisons

VDOT SMART SCALE Scoring Scenario Comparisons

CC:

Tonya Swartzendruber, Albemarle County
Alberic Karina-Plun, Albemarle County
Kelly Harris, Fluvanna County
Todd Fortune, Fluvanna County
Jim Frydl, Greene County
Stephanie Golon, Greene County
Chris Coon, Louisa County
Tom Egeland, Louisa County
Dylan Bishop, Nelson County
Chuck Proctor, VDOT Culpeper District
Sandy Shackelford, VDOT Culpeper District
Sean Nelson, VDOT Culpeper District
Carrie Shephard, VDOT Albemarle and Greene Residency
Scott Thornton, VDOT Fluvanna and Louisa Residency
Chris Winstead, VDOT Lynchburg District
Rick Youngblood, VDOT Lynchburg District
Carson Eckhardt, VDOT Lynchburg District
Robert Brown, VDOT Nelson Residency
Taylor Jenkins, TJPDC
Sara Pennington, TJPDC

Attachment A

SMART SCALE Area Type Weighting Comparisons: Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

Prepared by: VDOT Culpeper District

Area Types and Factor Weighting

SMART SCALE is the process that is used to prioritize projects and select projects for funding through the District Grant Program and the High Priority Project Program. The factors that are used to prioritize projects are based on those explicitly established in [Virginia Code Section 33.2-370](#) and in conformance with the established priorities identified through the Statewide Transportation Plan codified in [Virginia Code Section 33.2-353](#). The scoring factors are listed below:

- Congestion Reduction (Mitigation)
- Safety
- Accessibility
- Environmental Quality
- Economic Development
- Land Use

While the factors used to prioritize projects within the state are based on adopted code, the Commonwealth Transportation Board, acting through the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIP), has more direct influence on how those factors are used to select projects.

OIP has developed evaluation measures that are used to assess the benefits for each scoring category and uses a weighting system to determine the influence each of those evaluation measures has on the overall priority of a project. The SMART SCALE funding process uses MPO and PDC designations to assign area type categories to different regions throughout the state as shown in Figure 1. The categories were established in acknowledgment that different regions in the state will have different priorities based on the land use context. Tables 1, 2, and 3 show how much weight each of the scoring factors carried for the different area type categories in Rounds 4 through 6.

Table 1. Round 4 Factor Weights by Category. Source: SMART SCALE Round 4 Technical Guide.

Factor	Safety	Congestion Mitigation	Accessibility	Land Use	Economic Development	Environmental Quality
Category A	5%	45%	15%	20%	5%	10%
Category B	20%	15%	25%	10%	20%	10%
Category C	25%	15%	25%	N/A	25%	10%
Category D	30%	10%	15%	N/A	35%	10%

Table 2. Round 5 Factor Weights by Category. Source: SMART SCALE Round 5 Technical Guide.

Factor	Safety	Congestion Mitigation	Accessibility	Land Use	Economic Development	Environmental Quality
Category A	5%	45%	15%	20%	5%	10%
Category B	20%	15%	20%	15%	20%	10%
Category C	25%	15%	15%	10%	25%	10%
Category D	30%	10%	10%	10%	30%	10%

Table 3. Round 6 Factor Weights by Category. Source: SMART SCALE Round 6 Technical Guide.

Factor	Safety	Congestion Mitigation	Accessibility	Land Use	Economic Development	Environmental Quality
Category A	15%	45%	25%	Multiplier	5%	10%
Category B	20%	25%	25%	Multiplier	20%	10%
Category C	30%	20%	15%	Multiplier	25%	10%
Category D	40%	10%	10%	Multiplier	30%	10%

Category A is the designation for the areas of the state with the highest population density where congestion mitigation will contribute to 45% of the project score. At the other extreme, Category D is the designation for the rural areas of the state, where the factor with the highest amount of influence on how well a project will score is safety.

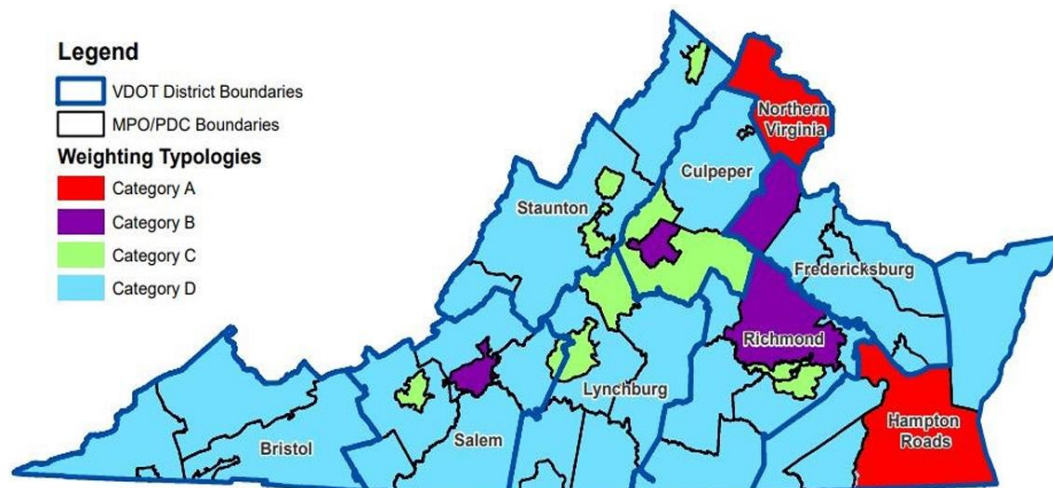


Figure 1. PDC and MPO Factor Weighting Typology Map. Source: SMART SCALE Round 6 Technical Guide.

A review of the Factor Weighting Typology Map shows that the TJPDC area is an outlier as being the only rural area (area not within an MPO) that is categorized as Area Type C. This is shown more clearly in Figure 2, which shows the area type categories broken out by the MPOs and the underlying Area Type for each of the PDCs in the state. The PDC area types are shown as the solid colors, with the MPO area types shown as the hatched areas overlaying the PDC regions. The Northern Virginia and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commissions are the only two PDCs that are not categorized as Area Type D, with the Northern Virginia PDC overlapping 100% with the boundary of the Northern Virginia portion of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. A list of the MPO-PDC Factor Weighting Typologies designations can be found in the [SMART SCALE Round 6 Technical Guide](#).

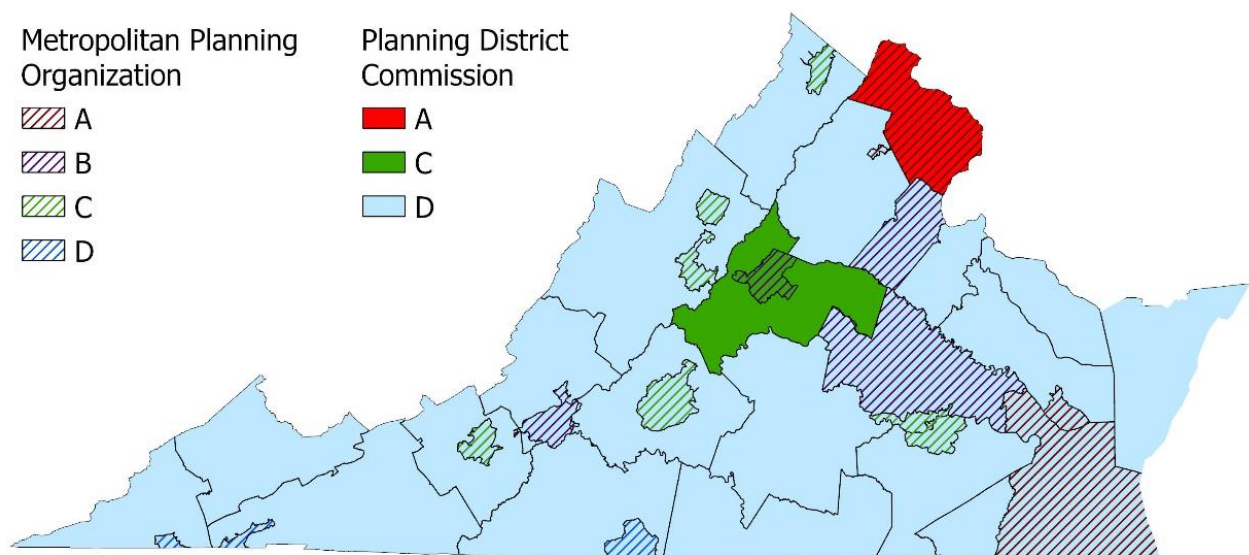


Figure 2. MPO and PDC Factor Weights Breakdown Map. Source: VDOT Culpeper District.

The TJPDC's designation as Area Type C is especially interesting for Nelson County. District Grant Program funding is allocated to each VDOT Construction District and applications eligible for District Grant Program funding are prioritized within each construction district. Nelson County is the only county within the TJPDC district that is not also in the Culpeper Construction District. This makes it the only rural locality whose project benefits are being calculated using the Area Type C factor weights in the Lynchburg Construction District.

Based on these considerations, it is therefore reasonable to evaluate whether the designation of the TJPDC as Category C is the most appropriate designation.

Funding Scenario Comparisons

Using the scoring outcomes provided by OIPI after Rounds 4, 5 and 6, we are able to estimate how project scores and potential funding outcomes would be impacted if the TJPDC region was categorized as Area Type D instead of Area Type C. VDOT staff has completed these reviews and have summarized the scoring outcomes for review by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission.

Notes on the scoring scenario comparison methodology:

- There have been revisions to how scores were calculated among all three of the rounds. To the extent possible, staff estimated the scoring outcomes both under the original scoring processes that were in effect during each round as well as the estimated scoring outcome under the Round 6 methodology to determine if the more comprehensive program updates would further impact how projects would perform under both Area Type C and D scoring scenarios.
- Land Use was not a scoring factor for area type categories C and D in Round 4. Since land use was converted to a multiplier in Round 6, the lack of the land use score will not impact the relative outcome of whether a project would score better using the C or D weighting factors since they would both be multiplied by the same multiplier. Because there was no Land Use score for Area Types C and D in Round 4, hypothetical rankings were not developed for the Round 6 scoring scenario. Since the area type for the other portions of the districts would not be changing, any increase in the baseline score will result in the project being more competitive in comparison to the overall slate of projects.
- Scoring comparisons for Rounds 4 and 5 using the Round 6 weighting scenario do not account for other changes in scoring methodology between rounds, especially for the changes in calculating the economic development scores, which could have additional influence on how well projects score.
- Projects submitted across multiple rounds will have different scoring outcomes due to the following:
 - SMART SCALE uses a scoring process that normalizes the raw factor score against the highest score received in that category each round. As the slate of projects changes each round, the highest score will change, altering the normalized score calculation.
 - SMART SCALE benefits are assessed using the most updated data sources available, which can lead to changes to benefits assessed from one round to the next.

Findings

While there are a few outliers in Round 5, overall, projects within the TJPDC area would receive higher scores, and therefore be ranked more competitively, if the TJPDC were categorized as Area Type D instead of Area Type C. The improvement in project scores is consistent for both the original scoring scenarios projects were scored under each round as well as for the changed scoring methodology implemented in Round 6. The project in Round 5 that indicated a lower score using the Area Type D factor weights and the Round 6 factor weighting had a low score overall, and one project showed an increased score but a decrease in ranking due to another project within the TJPDC being ranked slightly higher as a result of the change in area type.

There are no indications that being Area Type D would have led to changes in the projects that were selected for funding in the previous rounds, but it easily could have made a difference in Round 6 if there was enough funding in the Culpeper District Grant Program to fund an additional project. The US 33/Advance Mills/Greenecroft Intersection project moved from being ranked 8th in the Culpeper District to being ranked 5th in the Culpeper District by changing the Area Type from C to D, making that the next project to be funded should more funding have been available.

Attachment B

Round 4 Scoring Scenario Comparison

						Round 4 Factor Weighting		Round 6 Factor Weighting	
App Id	Area Type	District	Submitted By	Title	Grant Program	Area Type C*	Area Type D	Area Type C	Area Type D
						SMART SCALE Score	SMART SCALE Score	SMART SCALE Score	SMART SCALE Score
7002	C	Culpeper	TJPDC	Exit 107 Park and Ride Lot	HPP	13.52	15.58	13.47	14.48
7019	C	Culpeper	Fluvanna County	Troy Road (631) and Route 250 Roundabout	DGP	8.30	9.96	9.96	13.28
7021	C	Culpeper	Fluvanna County	South Boston Road (600) at Lake Monticello Road (618)	DGP	2.58	3.14	3.14	4.26
7193	C	Culpeper	Louisa County	Route 208 & Route 250 - Intersection Improvement	Both	2.42	2.49	2.44	2.51
7192	C	Culpeper	Louisa County	Route 250 and Route 15 - Intersection Improvement	Both	2.35	2.58	2.62	3.06
6961	C	Culpeper	Fluvanna County	Turkeysag Trail (Route 1015) & Route 53 Roundabout	DGP	2.03	2.22	2.36	2.81
7110	C	Culpeper	Greene County	US 29/616 (Carpenters Mill Rd)/ Commerce Dr Improvements	Both	0.39	0.48	0.45	0.59
7035	C	Lynchburg	Nelson County	Route 151 at Tanbark Drive intersection improvements	DGP	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.08
7032	C	Lynchburg	Nelson County	Route 29 & Oak Ridge Road	Both	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03
7033	C	Lynchburg	Nelson County	Route 6/151 Intersection	DGP	0.97	1.16	1.17	1.56

* Actual Score

	Area Type D results in lower score/worse ranking
	Area Type D ranking does not change
	Area Type D results in higher score/better ranking

Round 5 Scoring Scenario Comparison

					Round 5 Factor Weighting						Round 6 Factor Weighting					
					Area Type C*			Area Type D			Area Type C			Area Type D		
App Id	District	Submitted By	Title	Grant Program	SMART SCALE Score	Statewide Rank	District Rank	SMART SCALE Score	Statewide Rank	District Rank	SMART SCALE Score	Statewide Rank	District Rank	SMART SCALE Score	Statewide Rank	District Rank
8970	Culpeper	Louisa County	Route 250 and Route 15 - Intersection Improvement	Both	3.37	174	17	3.78	165	17	3.85	98	11	4.69	68	8
8971	Culpeper	Louisa County	Route 208 & Route 250 - Intersection Improvement	DGP	2.11	233	23	2.29	230	25	2.29	152	19	2.62	136	19
9051	Culpeper	Louisa County	Spring Creek/Camp Creek/Route 15 Intersection Improvements	DGP	1.30	307	31	1.28	308	32	1.39	226	25	1.42	226	26
9196	Culpeper	Fluvanna County	Turkeysag Trail (Route 1015) & Route 53 Roundabout	DGP	0.65	352	36	0.60	357	36	0.72	313	33	0.66	324	34
9200	Culpeper	Fluvanna County	Troy Road (631) and Route 15 Intersection	DGP	0.40	372	37	0.46	369	37	0.46	347	37	0.57	339	36
9202	Culpeper	Fluvanna County	Rte 53 and Rte 618 Martin's King Road Int Improvements	DGP	2.02	236	25	2.43	219	23	2.43	141	17	3.23	108	13
9480	Culpeper	Greene County	US 29/616 (Carpenters Mill Rd)/Commerce Dr Improvements	Both	1.19	313	32	1.42	296	31	1.34	229	26	1.76	200	24
9484	Culpeper	Greene County	US33-743 (Advance Mills) & 1050 (Greenecroft) Intersections	DGP	1.99	238	26	2.38	225	24	2.31	151	18	3.07	117	17
9038	Lynchburg	Nelson County	Route 6/151 Intersection Improvement	DGP	2.84	197	9	3.38	175	7	3.28	106	6	4.37	75	3
9039	Lynchburg	Nelson County	Route 151 at Tanbark Drive intersection improvements	DGP	0.64	354	26	0.76	341	25	0.74	310	19	0.98	269	18
9091	Lynchburg	Nelson County	Route 29 and Front Street Signalized R-cut intersection	Both	1.49	291	19	1.56	286	19	0.87	291	18	1.00	267	17

- * Actual Score
- Area Type D results in lower score/worse ranking
- Area Type D ranking does not change
- Area Type D results in higher score/better ranking

Round 6 Scoring Scenario Comparison

					Area Type C*			Area Type D		
App Id	District	Submitted By	Title	Grant Program	SMART Scale Score	Statewide Rank	District Rank	SMART Scale Score	Statewide Rank	District Rank
11771	Culpeper	Greene County	US33-743 (Advance Mills) & 1050 (Greenecroft) Intersections	DGP	4.10	70	8	5.43	49	5
11650	Culpeper	Greene County	RT29-616 RCUT Project	DGP	3.03	100	15	4.02	73	9
11715	Culpeper	Albemarle County	US 29 and Plank Road Intersection Improvements	DGP	2.91	106	17	3.87	80	11
11448	Culpeper	Louisa County	Route 15-22 Intersection Improvements	DGP	2.94	103	16	3.74	84	14
11447	Culpeper	Louisa County	Route 208 & Route 250 - Intersection Improvement	DGP	2.45	123	18	3.23	99	18
11442	Culpeper	Louisa County	Route 250 and Route 15 - Intersection Improvement	DGP	1.86	158	22	2.26	136	19
11471	Lynchburg	Nelson County	Route 151 at Tanbark Drive Roundabout	DGP	2.52	120	2	3.35	93	2

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Actual Score
- Area Type D results in lower score/worse ranking
- Area Type D ranking does not change
- Area Type D results in higher score/better ranking