

Scope of Study

RBA PILOT PROJECT STUDY: SECOND PHASE 2010

During 2009, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) carried out a pilot project study in accordance with P.A. 09-166 that assessed selected human services programs using a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework.¹ To further test an RBA approach to program evaluation, the committee decided to undertake a second study during 2010 within a different area of the budget – transportation. The committee determined the main focus will be on the Department of Transportation (DOT) and how to expedite major state transportation system improvement projects. The RBA framework would be used to try to identify ways of reducing completion times and overall costs for DOT projects, while maintaining compliance with key standards related to quality, environmental protection, and public accountability.

At present, the department's statewide transportation improvement program for Federal Fiscal Years 2010-13 contains 354 transportation projects in 39 federal funding categories. Estimated funding for all the projects is \$3.76 billion (federal), \$1.3 billion (state); and \$50.4 million (local). According to the DOT 2009 Master Transportation Plan, 36 current projects within the areas of aviation, highways, and public transportation, are considered major priority projects. Of those, 16 are in the initial planning stage, 11 are being designed, and 9 are under construction.

Ensuring the safety of the traveling public and facilitating efficient travel within and between modes (i.e., better mobility, accessibility, and integration) are high priorities for the department and its projects. DOT projects also are expected in some measure to improve quality of life (e.g., have a positive impact on the environment, community character, responsible growth) and promote economic vitality within the state and the region.

Given the many potential benefits, and often substantial costs, there are strong incentives to complete major transportation system improvements quickly and well. Successful transportation projects also require DOT to work effectively with a large number of other public and private entities and stakeholders. Legislators and others involved with transportation system issues have questioned whether the department's procedures could be streamlined, and coordination efforts strengthened, to expedite the project delivery process.

AREA OF FOCUS

Using the principles of Results-Based Accountability, PRI will assess the Department of Transportation project delivery process for major improvements to the state transportation system. Department policies and procedures will be evaluated using a case study method to determine if DOT projects have been delivered efficiently, while taking into account state transportation system goals related to mobility, safety, quality, economic development, environmental protection, and public accountability.

¹ Results-Based Accountability, a data-driven framework for evaluation to improve community well-being and government performance, was developed in the 1990s by Mark Friedman, a public policy and public administration consultant. To date, it has been used in over 40 U.S. states, within cities, counties, and executive branch agencies, and in at least 7 other countries. Connecticut is the only state government where the approach is led by the legislature; the Appropriations Committee has been applying RBA principles to the state budget process since 2005.

The department's project delivery process also will be examined within the context of broader state goals to which it is intended to make a significant contribution, or in RBA terminology, "quality of life results." For this pilot project study, the relevant quality of life results are captured by the current DOT mission statement: *Connecticut has a safe and efficient intermodal transportation network that improves the quality of life and promotes economic vitality for the state and the region.*²

AREAS OF ANALYSIS

- I) Collect and review data related to the desired quality of life results
 - A) Examine trends in key indicators of progress
 - B) Identify the main partners, public (including municipalities) and private, and major state programs that make significant contributions toward achieving the results statement
 - C) Describe current state strategies and existing coordination efforts undertaken to achieve the results statement

- II) Identify specific DOT projects for review as case studies
 - A) Compile an inventory of projects
 - B) Define project delivery process
 - C) Develop case study criteria (e.g., type, size, status) and select a sample of projects for review

- III) Collect and analyze data about each case study project to answer the three core RBA program performance questions:
 - A) *How much did we do?* Describe outputs, such as project scope and size, allocated resources
 - B) *How well did we do it?* Evaluate efficiency and quality of project delivery process (e.g. on-time, on-budget, meeting required environmental or other standards, in accordance with best practices)
 - C) *Is anyone better off?* Assess project outcomes, such as improved mobility and safety, enhanced environmental quality, growth of businesses and housing (to the extent data are available, comparing anticipated to any actual figures when possible)

- IV) Compare and contrast performance data compiled for case studies projects
 - A) Identify factors that appear related to project success (i.e., what is associated with a more or less efficient process and with good or poor outcomes)
 - B) Summarize "lessons learned" information (i.e., what worked well, what did not, and why)

- V) Identify data weaknesses (e.g., unavailable, incomplete, poor quality) and establish a data development and research agenda for addressing them

- VI) Develop recommendations for improving department performance and achieving better progress toward the desired result statement, giving particular attention to no- and low-cost changes that could have a positive impact on efficiency and effectiveness

AREAS NOT UNDER REVIEW

The study will focus on DOT project implementation from the time a project begins the design phase through completion of construction. The process for planning, approving, and prioritizing projects to improve the state transportation system will not be examined in detail or evaluated as part of this review.

² CT DOT 2009 Master Transportation Plan 2009-2010, January 2009 (p. 2).