

What is the Transportation Improvement Program (or TIP)?

Have you ever passed through a construction zone and wondered “what is this project intended to fix” or “who decided this project was a top priority”? Well, that project is likely one of the thousands of projects across the state that have competed for years to find its way into the North Carolina State Transportation Improvement Program (or STIP). The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) are the projects in the STIP that are located in the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO) area.

Projects in the STIP are those that are well-vetted and have gone through several levels of public comment before they make it into the real world and become part of your daily commute. These projects first start as **desired** projects in the DCHC MPO [Comprehensive Transportation Plan \(CTP\)](#). This plan is comprehensive in nature, as its name suggests, and contains all projects that could be built as far out as 30 or more years from now. From there, projects are prioritized and some make their way into the DCHC MPO [Metropolitan Transportation Plan \(MTP\)](#). This plan is also long-term but the prioritization of projects has separated them into 10-year sections, with some projects expected in the next 10 years, some expected in 10 to 20 years, and some expected in 20 to 30 years. Both the CTP and MTP require extensive public engagement under the DCHC MPO [Public Involvement Policy \(PIP\)](#), a policy which also requires public engagement prior to adoption.

Now you're probably wondering where the STIP and the TIP come into the equation. Unlike the CTP or the MTP that are longer term documents, the STIP is only for projects expected within the next 10 years. The first 5 years of the program (those in the next five years) are those projects that finally cascaded all the way down and have funding assigned to them; the last five years of the program are projects that were prioritized from the MTP, but will still have to undergo additional prioritization to make it into the first five years of the program and receive funding.

It can certainly be surprising to think that the construction projects you see on the road could have taken 30 or more years to get to where they are. For projects that make their way into the TIP, it is not that they are the only projects that are being considered but rather that they are the highest priority projects for the funding that is available at the time. If you live in the DCHC MPO area and would like to be a part of the transportation planning process, consider getting engaged at all levels of the process and stay “in-the-know” by following the MPO on social media through [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [YouTube](#) and catch up on what's going on in your community.