Chapter 1:

**1. What is the purpose of the NYSDOT Local Projects Manual (LPM)?**

**Answer:**  
The LPM is a guidance document developed by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to assist local project sponsors—such as municipalities, counties, and nonprofit agencies—in managing transportation projects that seek **federal and/or state aid**. The manual explains the **scoping, design, construction, and maintenance** phases of a project. It ensures that these sponsors comply with relevant **federal and state laws, policies, approvals, and documentation requirements**, particularly when using Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding. Although comprehensive, sponsors are encouraged to consult additional references and rely on their **Regional Local Project Liaison (RLPL)** for further support.

**2. Who can use the LPM and what responsibilities does NYSDOT retain?**

**Answer:**  
The manual is intended for **non-NYSDOT sponsors**—including counties, cities, towns, villages, and public/nonprofit agencies—who administer transportation projects. However, under **U.S. Code Title 23**, NYSDOT retains ultimate administrative responsibility and **oversight** for all federally funded transportation projects within New York State. Even for non-federal aid projects, NYSDOT maintains a supervisory role to ensure compliance with procedural and financial requirements. Sponsors are delegated responsibilities but must operate under NYSDOT’s guidance and oversight.

**3. How is the manual organized, and what are the key topics covered in the subsequent chapters?**

**Answer:**  
The manual is divided into **19 chapters**, each addressing a critical aspect of project development, such as:

* **Chapter 2:** Roles and Responsibilities of stakeholders
* **Chapter 3:** Project initiation and funding mechanisms
* **Chapter 4:** State-Local Agreements (SLAs) for funding
* **Chapter 5:** Accounting and reimbursement procedures
* **Chapter 7:** Environmental process under NEPA and SEQRA
* **Chapter 13:** Civil rights requirements and DBE/EEO compliance
* **Chapter 18:** Emergency relief programs for disaster recovery

Each chapter includes detailed guidance and may include **appendices, forms, and procedural checklists** to ensure compliance and streamline project execution.

**4. What is the role of a Regional Local Project Liaison (RLPL)?**

**Answer:**  
The **RLPL** is the primary NYSDOT point of contact for local project sponsors. Their responsibilities include:

* Assisting sponsors in **navigating procedures** related to federally and state-aided projects
* Providing **clarification and document access** relevant to project planning and implementation
* Helping with **project compliance checks** and **coordination with NYSDOT**
* Facilitating **communication** and ensuring that the Sponsor understands updates or changes to laws, policies, or the LPM itself

Sponsors are strongly advised to consult their RLPL early and regularly during the life of a project.

**5. What are the key federal requirements that sponsors must be aware of?**

**Answer:**  
Sponsors must comply with a variety of **federal regulations and policies**, including but not limited to:

* **NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act)** for environmental evaluations
* **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act** for non-discrimination
* **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** and **Section 504** for accessibility
* **2 CFR 200** for single audit requirements (especially Chapter 16)
* **Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act** for right-of-way acquisitions
* **Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)** and **Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)** rules
* **Federal Aid Ineligibility Notices (FAINs)** for identifying non-compliant spending

Failure to adhere to these can result in **loss of funding** or project deauthorization.

TIP Guidebook

What is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)?

The TIP is a staged, financially constrained, multi-year (minimum four-year) program listing all highway, multimodal, and transit projects eligible for federal and state funding. Every project must be in the TIP to receive federal/state dollars, permits, or environmental review. It incorporates a Cooperative, Continuous, and Comprehensive (3C) planning process, aligns with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, supports federally defined planning factors and TPM goals, and undergoes public review including at least one formal meeting in non-attainment areas

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What federal requirements govern TIP development and approval?

Under 23 CFR 450.324, the TIP must be updated at least every four years, demonstrate fiscal constraint (a financial plan showing committed and reasonably available revenues), include all federally funded and regionally significant non-federal projects, ensure air-quality conformity in non-attainment areas, and provide public comment opportunities. It must reflect the current Long-Range Plan, document progress on Transportation Control Measures, and support planning factors such as safety, environmental protection, system preservation, and economic vitality .

What is NYSDOT's "Forward Four" Asset Management Strategy?

To maximize scarce resources, NYSDOT and NYSTA adhere to four guiding principles:

Maintenance First: Preserve existing infrastructure before new builds.

System not Projects: Prioritize system-wide benefits over isolated fixes.

Maximize Return on Investment: Use life-cycle cost analyses to invest where condition gains per dollar are highest.

Make It Sustainable: Balance fiscal responsibility, environmental soundness, and long-term system resilience

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How does GBNRTC ensure meaningful public participation and consultation?

GBNRTC's Public Participation Plan, approved November 2023, mandates consultation with all interested parties, at least one formal public meeting in TMAs, and 30-day public review for TIP amendments. Outreach includes email blasts, website and social-media updates, GIS visualizations, accessible document formats, tribal nation engagement, and targeted efforts in underserved/rural areas. Inter-agency consultation spans federal, state, local, tribal, and housing agencies to gather comprehensive input .

What is the project submission, evaluation, and selection process?

Project sponsors submit proposals via a Google Form with 38 questions covering location, scope, costs, and deficiencies. Submissions feed into a database for evaluation against seven categories: MTP linkage, TPM goals, federal planning factors, performance measures (safety, asset condition, reliability, freight, environment, delivery delays), equity, and community impact. GIS tools support spatial analyses. Scores and sponsor priorities are reconciled under fiscal targets by the Transportation Projects Subcommittee and PCC, followed by public review and final Policy Committee approval. All approved projects are entered and managed in the eSTIP system .

PLAFAP Chapter 9

Top 5 FAQs

1. What core design standards must locally administered federal-aid projects follow?

Answer: All projects (except very large cities) must use NYSDOT's AASHTO-based standards from HDM Chapter 2 for critical elements—design speed, horizontal/vertical alignment, cross-section widths, clear zones, drainage, pedestrian/bicycle facilities, and bridge criteria. For features lacking NYSDOT or AASHTO values, sponsors apply approved federal, state, local, or industry codes. Any nonstandard critical element (e.g. sub-minimum curve radius) requires a Nonstandard Feature Justification (HDM Exhibit 2-15) and approval per the Project Approvals Matrix (Chapter 8)

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2. How are "nonstandard" and "non-conforming" design features handled?

Answer:

Nonstandard Features: When a critical design criterion isn't met, sponsors complete a formal justification form, analyzing safety impacts (accident history, mitigation measures), costs (approximate estimates, benefit/cost ratios), environmental, ROW, and system-compatibility factors. These justifications go to the Regional Local Project Liaison (RLPL) for review by NYSDOT's Region, Main Office, or FHWA as indicated in PDM Exhibit 4-2

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Non-Conforming Features: For secondary elements (e.g. superelevation runout, curb details, auxiliary lane lengths) that deviate from HDM Chapter 5 values, sponsors document the trade-offs quantitatively where possible. Minor deviations warrant brief notes; major ones need detailed explanation equivalent to a nonstandard justification

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3. Who performs Quality Assurance (QA) on materials and how is it documented?

Answer:

On the State/National Highway System: NYSDOT conducts off-site QA (material testing, shop-drawing review) per Standard Specifications; contract documents must include a "Special Note" directing contractors to submit materials only through NYSDOT-approved plants, confirming NYSDOT's final approval is binding

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Off the System: Sponsors decide QA responsibility during the Initial Project Proposal with the RLPL. If NYSDOT opts out, sponsors must provide independent QA (through inspection firms or testing labs), clearly described in the CMP and bid documents. Contractors remain responsible only for Quality Control

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4. When and how are Special Specifications and proprietary items used?

Answer:

Special Specifications: Written for rare or nontraditional work not covered by standard specs (e.g. architectural elements, unique drainage structures). Sponsors must source NYSDOT's catalog of approved Special Specs or develop new ones per HDM Chapter 21, then submit them with technical justification to the RLPL for DQAB-coordinated approval

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Proprietary Items: Federal funds can't cover royalties for patented materials unless (a) awarded via competitive bid with equivalent alternatives, (b) certified essential for synchronization or no alternative exists (requires public-interest approval), or (c) used experimentally on short sections. Sponsors justify proprietary use project-by-project per 23 CFR 635.411, documented in the specifications

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5. What reference manuals and issuances govern these standards and specifications?

Answer: Sponsors must stay current with NYSDOT and federal guidance, including:

Design: AASHTO "Green Book," HDM Chapters 2/5/17/18, Bridge Manual, LRFD Bridge Specs, MUTCD & NYS Supplement

Construction: NYSDOT Standard Specifications (Construction & Materials), Standard Sheets, MURK manuals

Supplemental Guidance: Engineering Directives, Instructions, Bulletins (via the E I I System), Consultant Instructions, CADD Standards, Materials Methods

Special Specs Catalog: Online Pay Item Catalog for general-use specs

Sponsors must document all referenced standards in the PS&E package and ensure their design professionals are licensed in the appropriate discipline

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