# Sample Expert Panel Survey

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## Introduction

There are four different project examples that you will first read about and then evaluate questions based on the examples. **Project summaries** can be read before each set of questions. For the evaluation of each project, a series of questions will be asked referring to that specific project example. Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 your immediate estimated rating for the initial question, where 1 is “strongly disagree”, and 5 is “strongly agree”. Or, specify NA if unknown or not applicable. But please try to use the NA category sparingly.

Then, each of those questions will be followed by some reasoning questions to determine the rationale of the initial answer based on the different project characteristics. The same scale as before will apply: 1 is “strongly disagree”, and 5 is “strongly agree”. Or, specify NA if unknown or not applicable.

Many of these questions are not specific and could deserve the answer, “It depends.” There is likely no precise answer, but your estimation is helpful! Please answer with the idea of addressing “the most common cases”. In the optional “Notes” fields, please also feel free to write explanations that can help researchers in understanding caveats and intricacies.

# Project #1

## Regional Bridge Project

Project #1 is to deliver a large mile-long bridge for a major highway that crosses city lines. It is highly prioritized (in the UTP or other planning schemes) and might have a dedicated funding source available for long-term investment. This has a long construction phase, detailed planning, strict schedule, and thus not flexible to changes.

Example characteristics

* Planned project construction period: 3-5 years
* Budget (project base cost): About one billion dollars
* Risk of delay: Low
* Conventional: Yes, traditional construction with no sustainability objectives

# Project #2

## Interregional Major Highway Project

Project #2 is a large highway project for a 10-mile stretch that crosses multiple cities (e.g. a part of I-35). It is highly prioritized (in the UTP or other planning scheme) and might have a dedicated funding source available for long-term investment. This has a long construction phase, detailed planning, strict schedule, and thus not flexible to changes.

Example characteristics

* Planned project construction period: 2-3 years
* Budget (project base cost): Hundreds of Millions
* Risk of delay: Low
* The project carries mobility and environmental sustainability objectives.
* Conventional: Yes, traditional construction methods

# Project #3

## Suburban Corridor Project

Project #3 improves 2 miles of a suburban corridor that is lined with retail businesses. Activities in this project add turn lanes to the roadway, add pedestrian safety features, and install new traffic signals with advanced adaptive signal timing technology. The corridor is on the periphery of a major city’s limits and crosses into an adjacent municipality. Since it may not be urgent, the project schedule is flexible and adjustable for other prioritized projects.

Example characteristics

* Planned project period: Within 1 year
* Budget (project base cost): Millions
* Risk of delay: High
* Conventional: Yes

# Project #4

## Rural Road Maintenance Project

Project #4 seeks to perform preventative maintenance on a 4-mile long two-lane, rural roadway. It has comparatively lower state priority or significance, but might be considered important by local authorities or residents. This project involves sealing and patching the cracks and potholes on the existing pavement surface, and then overlaying with a two-inch thick asphalt concrete pavement. The conventional project might need short-term investment and a short construction phase. TxDOT or MPOs may have experience with similar projects. Since it may not be urgent, the project schedule is flexible and adjustable for other prioritized projects, though it should still begin on schedule.

Example characteristics

* Planned project construction period: Within 1 year
* Budget (project base cost): Millions
* Risk of delay: Medium
* Conventional: Yes

# Total List of Questions for the Expert Panel

This section lists the questions that will be asked to the respondents. In this document after these questions, an example is given of one of these questions in its proposed online display format, which asks for the respondent’s level of agreement to the question’s statement, as well as details that help explain the respondent’s reasoning.

1. Predictability –
   1. Funding sources that are **predictable** year to year are highly necessary for Project 1.
      1. ***Predictable*** *funding sources are those that are the same every year, both in funding allocation and the amount of funding available. It isn’t expected to change much from year to year.*
2. Stability –
   1. Project 1 can accommodate **unreliable** funding sources.
      1. ***Unreliable*** *funding sources refer to funding sources that are not stable year over year in funding allocation or amount of funding available for use.*
3. Public Acceptance / Political Viability –
   1. In long-term planning, Project 1 requires funding sources that are **feasible** **through** today’s **passed legislation**.
      1. *For example, funding sources that are currently going through legislation or are expected to be available to TxDOT soon (but have not yet been approved by law), would NOT be a possibility for Project 1.*
      2. *It may be challenging to gain public acceptance for VMT fees, for example, due to the large extent of the paradigm shift in how people are charged for transportation, plus concerns about privacy implications*
4. Promotion of efficient use –
   1. Project 1 requires a funding source that **provides incentives** to encourage users to **conserve travel and resources**.
      1. *For example, people could be charged a gas tax when they buy fuel based on fuel volume. More tax is paid when resources are not conserved. On the other hand, people will pay less in gas taxes if they drive less (buy less fuel) and conserve resources. This applies to mechanisms that vary according to consumption. Another example would be a Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) fee, where taxes paid varies by distance traveled.*
5. User Equity –
   1. It is highly favorable for Project 1 to have a funding source that **charges those who use** or benefit from the project.
      1. *For example, funding for developing or maintaining tolling facilities can often be developed from the fees that users pay to use the said facility. People who do not use the tolled facility will not likely have any additional fees or charges to pay to cover the new construction or maintenance.*
6. Social Equity –
   1. It is NOT appropriate for the funding source for Project 1 to be **more burdensome for troubled populations** or future generations.
      1. *A more burdensome funding source is one where lower-income populations would be paying more, in percent of total income, for this project than other groups. For example, if a city is looking to build a new bridge in a low-income neighborhood, it may be inappropriate to require many fees and charges for those populations surrounding the construction.*
7. Revenue Potential – 
   1. It is necessary for Project 1 to have **one** **single funding source** that generates **adequate amounts of revenue** to match (or exceed) expenditures for the project.
      1. *This is compared to the possibility of using multiple funding sources to match the budget and expenditures for the project.*
8. Timing of Revenue –
   1. It is highly favorable for Project 1 to have a funding source that provides the **funding upfront** compared to a funding source that could **take considerable time** to secure the funding.
      1. *For example, developer fees, which are not released to the developer until development/construction is complete, take considerable time to secure the funding.*
9. Staffing Requirements -
   1. Project 1 **requires large amounts** of **specialized** **staff** and resources.
      1. *This could include a need for innovative specialists during construction, or staff that are necessary to operate and maintain the respective facility after construction is complete.*
10. Traditional vs Innovative Construction Methods
    1. The **overall expenses** due to the hiring of expertise/talent would **increase** if Project 1 uses innovative construction methods compared to traditional methods.
       1. *Innovative construction methods could include cutting-edge technologies or new management strategies, whereas traditional construction methods would not have these features.*
11. Mid-Project Delay Costs –
    1. Project 1 would have a **substantial** **loss** if a **one-week delay** occurred.
       1. *Losses consist not of financial losses, but of opportunity losses (the health of those involved, environmental factors, available infrastructure for the public), and could have been avoided had the project stayed on schedule.*
12. Starting Delay Costs -
    1. A **delay of start time** in Project 1 would **NOT** cause numerous losses because of the delay.
       1. *Losses consist not of financial losses, but of opportunity losses (the health of those involved, environmental factors, available infrastructure for the public), and could have been avoided had the project stayed on schedule.*
13. Starting Delays due to Availability of Funds -
    1. If an appropriate funding mechanism is highly requested by many different projects, Project 1 may be **deferred (not let)**, or have a **start time delay** because of **its level of significance**.
       1. *For example, if the priority of Project 1 is not very high, it may lose its funding opportunity to other, more significant, projects and therefore be deferred.*
14. Sustainability –
    1. Project 1 requires funding sources that **are viable and will not expire** over the course of many years.
       1. *For example, both Proposition 7 and Proposition 1 funds are established through at least the year 2032, and therefore will not expire until at least that date.*
15. In use or being considered –
    1. It is **NOT** vital for Project 1 to be funded with sources that TxDOT has had **extensive experience** with.
       1. *For example, TxDOT has extensive experience with gas tax revenues and vehicle registration fees. These are considered standard (traditional), familiar funding mechanisms. On the other hand, newer mechanisms that could soon be leveraged by TxDOT would also be much less well known to TxDOT.*
16. Ease of implementation –
    1. Project 1 **CANNOT** accommodate funding sources that have **significant administrative overhead**, and those sources should be avoided.
       1. *For example, toll fees may require much more extensive administrative fees and overhead than a different mechanism due to the complexity of the funding.*
17. Ability to Enforce –
    1. Project 1 depends upon a funding source that is **easy to collect.** 
       1. *A funding source that is* ***easy to collect*** *is one that minimizes evasion and the cost of enforcement compared to other sources. For example, fuel tax is easy to collect because most vehicles are difficult to drive without paying for gasoline. A vehicle-miles fee would likely pose more challenges for the state to enforce and collect.*
18. Project Importance –
    1. Project 1 is **urgent** and therefore will be **funded soon**.
       1. *Dedicated funding is not expected to be rerouted for other significant projects. For example, Project 1’s funding will not be taken away for any other projects, which would then require new funding sources for Project 1.*
19. Number of Funding Sources –
    1. It would be **acceptable** or **advantageous** for Project 1 to have **one single funding source**.
       1. *This is compared to a situation where Project 1 would be funded from multiple sources.*

The next page introduces the onscreen display and question format for each of these questions.

# Example of Question Format

This section shows an example of how the questions from the previous section will each be presented to the user. The first portion assesses the respondent’s agreement to the question statement, and the next portion seeks to capture the respondent’s reasoning. Free-text notes may be provided for the respondent to explain caveats and other relevant information.

1. Funding sources that are **predictable** year to year are highly necessary for Project 1.
   1. ***Predictable*** *funding sources are those that are the same every year, both in funding allocation and amount of funding available. It isn’t expected to change much from year to year.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Response (**1** “strongly disagree” through **5** “strongly agree” or **NA**): |  |

**Reasons for this statement:**

Score (**1** “strongly disagree” through **5** “strongly agree” or **NA**)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reasoning** | **N/A** | **Disagree** | | **Neutral** | | **Agree** | | **Notes** |
| **Large** bridge **construction** project | N/A | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 |  |
| **Strict**budget | N/A | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 |  |
| Long term **investment** **(over 2 years)** | N/A | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 |  |
| Long **construction** phase **(over 2 years)** | N/A | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 |  |
| High **priority** | N/A | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 |  |
| **Strict**schedule | N/A | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 |  |
| **Traditional** construction methods | N/A | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 |  |
| **Urban** location | N/A | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 |  |
| **No sustainability** objectives | N/A | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 |  |
| **Expertise** required | N/A | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 5 |  |