



2025 Regional Active Transportation Program Policy Framework

Receive and File

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Attachments: Yes

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Referring Committee: Transportation

Issue:

This item provides information on the development of the 2025 Regional Active Transportation Program (ATP) Policy Framework.

Recommendation:

This item is information only, no action is recommended at this time.

Background/Analysis:

The ATP was created by Senate Bill (SB) 99 in 2013, with the first competitive program in 2014. The ATP combines several smaller active transportation funding sources into one larger program with broader eligibilities. The primary goal of the ATP is to increase use of active modes, and SB 99 requires that a minimum of 25 percent of ATP funds must benefit disadvantaged communities. The ATP is a highly competitive program jointly managed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the California Transportation Commission (CTC). The ATP has a sequential selection process split between a statewide competition followed by regional competitions, each with its own funds. During the first selection process, the CTC develops a list of projects recommended for funding in the statewide ATP based on score, eligibility, and deliverability. Projects that are unsuccessful in the statewide ATP can then compete for funding in the Regional ATP. Unlike other funds managed by SACOG, Regional ATP project savings and projects that lose their funding are not returned to SACOG for later programming in the six counties. Regional ATP evaluation criteria include deliverability measures to emphasize the importance of keeping funds in our region.

Staff works with El Dorado County Transportation Commission and Placer County Transportation Planning Agency to develop and implement the Regional ATP. The Statewide ATP Guidelines place restrictions on how regions can distribute funds, but MPOs can submit regional guidelines to the CTC for approval to use in regional processes. CTC identified the areas to which a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) can propose changes when implementing a regional program. Those areas are scoring criteria and weighting, minimum project sizes, match requirements, definitions of disadvantaged communities, and using a supplemental call for projects and applications.

Discussion/Analysis:

The CTC will adopt the 2025 Statewide ATP Guidelines at its March 21-22, 2024, meeting, which will initiate the statewide call for projects. The CTC estimates that there will be \$568 million of ATP funding for the

statewide ATP and \$15.9 million for SACOG's Regional ATP. Project applications for the statewide competition will be due to CTC staff by June 17, 2024. SACOG strongly recommends its agencies submit applications to the statewide competition prior to competing in the regional competition. As in previous cycles, SACOG staff will provide necessary technical assistance to agencies applying within our region.

SACOG's regional program is guided by a document called the Regional ATP Policy Framework. This informational item provides an opportunity for the Transportation Committee and SACOG board to give input on the development of the 2025 Regional ATP Policy Framework ahead of future board action on the Framework at the April meeting. Attachment A provides a draft schedule for both Statewide and Regional ATP Milestones.

The 2025 Regional ATP Policy Framework will carry forward most of the structure of the 2023 Regional ATP Policy Framework (Attachment B) but will consider updates in response to changes the CTC is making to the statewide ATP. The CTC's ATP Guidelines for Cycle 7 include a few changes:

- Simplifying the application process through a new online portal (submittable)
- Developing a new process for tracking federal Justice40 requirements
- Expanding the disadvantaged community qualifiers to include new federal tools – Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool and US DOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer
- Creating a new appendix with guidance on anti-displacement policies
- Refining the quick-build project guidelines

In response to these statewide changes, staff are considering the following potential changes to the 2025 Regional ATP Policy Framework (see Attachment C for tracked changes):

1. Carrying over program schedule and project type information from the Statewide ATP Guidelines for clarity and consistency. This schedule is reflective of statewide and regional milestones and will also include a Region Four-Year Funding Estimate Table for the programming years FY 2025-FY 2029
2. Including a list of all eligible project types for clarity and consistency
3. Carrying over definitions and details for disadvantaged communities from the Statewide ATP Guidelines for clarity and consistency. These include Median Household Income, CalEnviroScreen, National School Lunch Program, Healthy Places Index, Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, USDOT Equitable Transportation Community Explorer, Native American Tribal Lands, and Regional Definition

In Cycle 6 of the Regional ATP, projects were initially scored out of a 95-point total without any points considered for trails implementation or disadvantaged communities (see Attachment B for details on "Evaluating Project Performance"). Staff identified potential changes to how these elements are evaluated (see Attachment C for yellow highlighted areas):

1. **Trails implementation scoring:** The past scoring method provided an opportunity for up to 5 additional points to be awarded to projects that addressed the regional trail network.
 - a. Staff is considering a reduction in the number of points for regional trail network implementation projects. This will still give connecting projects some points but would decrease the gap in scores from otherwise high performing projects.
2. **Disadvantaged communities scoring:** In Cycle 6, after the initial scoring process of 95 points, the scoring committee evaluated the highest scoring projects to see if at least 40 percent of the projects

were located within a disadvantaged community. If the 40 percent criteria was not met, projects would then be evaluated for disadvantaged community benefit and up to 10 points would be added to the initial score.

- a. Staff is considering to allow disadvantaged communities to be a part of initial scoring for applications in the regional ATP. This would enable projects to be better assessed for their equity impacts and further the scoring committee's understanding of the project design and decision-making process, in comparison to just the general basis of the 40 percent criteria. If this change does not take place in Cycle 7, staff would propose to align disadvantaged communities scoring in the Regional ATP with other regional funding rounds in future ATP cycles.

The Transportation Committee provided staff with feedback on the potential changes to the Regional ATP Policy Framework. Director Houdesheldt expressed interest in keeping the distribution of points for projects that connect to the Regional Trail Network as it currently stands in the 2023 Regional ATP Policy Framework (Attachment B). He noted the importance of trails connecting to destinations and providing options for people to feel safer in their choice of shifting modes to bicycling or walking. Both Director Houdesheldt and Director Joiner expressed a desire for the evaluation of disadvantaged communities to remain as it was in Cycle 6. Director Branscum asked questions regarding disadvantaged communities metrics and the statewide scoring process. Staff explained what the scoring process was for projects and disadvantaged communities as well as the metrics that determine a disadvantaged community. Staff have added a slide to the slide deck (Attachment D) that describes the scoring process with a flow chart. Staff will continue to engage with member agencies throughout March to collect feedback. Feedback is still welcome on this item.

Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

This item has no fiscal impact to the agency's operating budget, other than already budgeted staff time.