



2026 Regional Trail Implementation Strategy Update - Prioritization Methodology

Receive and File

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Attachments: Yes

Referring Committee: Transportation

Issue:

This item provides information and background on the Prioritization Methodology that will be utilized to prioritize ten trail projects for individualized implementation strategies through the 2026 Regional Trail Implementation Strategy.

Request:

Receive & File

Recommendation for Board:

None; this is for information only.

Recommendation for Committee:

None; this is for information only.

Background:

About the 2022 Regional Trail Network Action Plan

In 2022, the SACOG Board adopted the Regional Trail Network Action Plan. The regional trail network was collaboratively identified in partnership with local agencies, special districts, public health professionals, and community-focused organizations. The 2022 Plan is meant to further goals of environmental justice, all ages and abilities, economic vitality, health, safety, and recreation. The final trail network, which included over 1,000 miles of trails, focused on equitably creating regional trail connectivity and increasing access to the destinations that support the vitality and livability of the region. Most identified connections (over 250 miles of existing trails and more than 800 miles of planned trails) were selected from local plans for their potential to make connections across boundaries in the region. Over 300 miles of trail study corridors— connections identified for further study in future planning documents, planned connections with known implementation challenges, and high-concept connections— were also identified for their potential to connect via trails or trail-like facilities across the region, including 50 miles of on-road separated bikeways.

About the 2026 Regional Trail Implementation Strategy

A key next step in advancing trails in the region was to develop a clear strategy to guide implementation of the prioritized network. SACOG, as a regional convener, supporter of interagency coordination, and technical

assistance provider, is committed to supporting agencies in their trail implementation efforts. Thus, in 2024, the Board authorized the release of the 2026 Regional Trail Network Implementation Strategy request for proposals. SACOG contracted with Toole Design Group to develop the 2026 Strategy and launched the project in October 2024. The 2026 Strategy is an 18-month effort that will outline implementation strategies and next steps for SACOG, develop individual strategies for up to ten agencies, and provide implementation technical assistance for up to ten recipients throughout the region. In the end, the goal is to have a strategy that will outline next steps for SACOG with a menu of options for funding and governance, implementation strategies for ten agencies that will provide concrete next steps for implementing the regional network, and a replicable technical assistance program for future trail implementation technical assistance.

Prioritization of the Trail Network

Concurrent with the approval of the 2022 trail network, the Board approved a prioritization framework to focus regional coordination efforts. The framework was designed to elevate trail connections that demonstrate regional potential through different combinations of performance outcomes. This prioritization effort focused on both quantitative and qualitative measures. The criteria looked at metrics related to trail network goals (e.g. safety, health, economic vitality, and others), regionalism (e.g. collaboration, strengthening the network, and access), and readiness factors (e.g. community support, alignment with local priorities, and prior work completed). All of these were developed through a highly collaborative process alongside regional partners and the SACOG Board. Once the list was prepared, recommendations for projects were grouped into tiers based on each project's readiness to move forward so the recommended actions would build on locally driven efforts.

In March 2025, the Transportation Committee heard about the challenges and barriers that agencies face while implementing trail segments. Since then, our working group met to discuss the prioritization metrics that will be used to re-run the prioritization that was done for the 2022 Plan. For the 2026 Strategy (SACOG's current implementation effort), the prioritization methodology will largely be the same as it was for the 2022 Plan.

Discussion/Analysis:

The updated 2026 Strategy prioritization does not deviate from the 2022 process. This exercise, which will occur this summer, will:

- **Retain the 2022 prioritization framework**, which was approved by the SACOG Board and Transportation Committee during the 2022 Strategic Plan process.
- **Refine minor elements of the analytical methodology** to create efficiencies and ensure that SACOG staff can easily replicate the process in the future.
- **Exclude projects that have been constructed between 2022 and today** (those projects will move from "planned" to "existing" in the dataset and will not be included in the prioritization rankings.
- **Use new datasets for which there are more recently available data**, for example collisions, speeds, and roadway volumes.
- **Include updated project readiness information that may have changed since 2022**, such as the status of community engagement, design, and funding. SACOG staff are working one on one with local agencies to collect this project-specific data.

Please see Attachment A for more details.

Looking Ahead

Committee member comments are welcomed on the network prioritization methodology. Committee

members are welcome to reach out to SACOG staff if interested in discussing it further. Once this exercise is run, the Transportation Committee and Board will hear about the ten agencies who ranked the highest and take action on that list. These ten agencies will receive detailed, individualized strategies that will support them in taking their next steps towards implementation.

Technical Assistance

The trail implementation technical assistance program has launched. SACOG received nine applications and is going to provide support to eight agencies. Eligibility required that agencies have their project listed in the 2022 Regional Trail Network Action Plan. Those who applied or expressed interest and were not included as part of the 2022 Plan have been noted for follow-up in future rounds of technical assistance.

Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

Included in the Overall Work Program/Budget

List of Attachments:

Attachment A: Prioritization Framework Methodology Memo