



Transportation Committee

Meeting Date: March 7, 2024

[[!Agenda Item No. {{item.number}}!]]

Federal Funding Grant Prioritization

Action

Author: Chris Dougherty

Attachments: Yes

Approved by: Kristina Svensk

Referring Committee: Not Applicable

Issue:

SACOG staff has developed a project prioritization methodology to create a priority project list for advocacy and general agency support for regional projects. The project list initially encompasses only near-term known federal requests, but will be inclusive of state programs during later efforts.

Recommendation:

That the Transportation Committee recommend that the board approve the staff recommended list of prioritized projects for federal funding programs.

Background/Analysis:

In 2021, the Biden Administration signed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), authorizing \$1.2 trillion in new transportation funding. Most of this funding was programmed into new and existing competitive grant programs. Since the signing of the bill, regions across the country have been competing for this new funding opportunity.

The SACOG region has had some successes with this funding. However, the region has not been as competitive as we could be for these new funding opportunities. While competitiveness can be attributed to many factors, one key issue in our region has been a lack of regional coordination for funding requests. At the same time, with the limited capacity of the regional funding round to implement large regional projects, federal funding will be a key strategy in implementing the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) while also allowing regional funds to be focused on smaller projects that may not be strong candidates for federal dollars. Staff is proposing a strategy to prioritize a limited number of regional projects that would garner SACOG support in order to better compete for the federal grant programs. SACOG, in partnership with local agencies, has developed this short list of projects for a regional endorsement for identified funding programs. This strategy aims to maximize the Sacramento region's share of funding.

Discussion/Analysis:

Staff presented a methodology for project prioritization in February to the Transportation Committee and included the information as a Receive and File item to the board later that month. Additionally, staff discussed this item with the Board Funding Round Working Group, and received positive feedback and support for coalescing around a specific set of projects that help our region meet our identified goals and desired

outcomes.

To ensure a balanced approach for this strategy, staff focused on three main concepts: 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) advancement, national competitiveness, and minimizing intra-regional competition. This strategy will separate the prioritized list of projects into specific project types or program areas to minimize competition between projects. Projects have been prioritized for a specific funding program. The project types include the following:

- Bridges
- Transit
- Rural
- Adaptation/Resiliency
- Carbon Reduction
- Roads

Eligibility

All projects considered met the following minimum criteria before further evaluation:

- Actively seeking federal funding
- In the current 2020 MTP/SCS
- Past SACOG funding award or other significant funding investment

After projects met eligibility requirements, they were evaluated on the following areas:

- **Regional Serving:** Projects should be regional in nature. Some examples of how this can be done are large projects that improve regional mobility, accelerate vehicle miles traveled/greenhouse gas reducing projects, advance regional goals and initiatives (including SACOG’s MTP and Strategic Plan), involve partnerships with multiple agencies and/or cross agency boundaries.
- **Competitiveness:** Projects were evaluated based on the specified funding program or program area. While project competitiveness can vary based on these, the BIL introduced two new policy areas that are consistent through all the grant programs – equity and climate/resilience. Both the federal and state levels have increased a focus on equity, which will continue to be a core tenant of funding programs and decision making. The climate/resilience policies aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and add resilience to the country’s transportation network. In addition to this, projects are also evaluated on how well the project aligns with the specified grant program’s goals and requirements.
- **Readiness:** Project readiness is an important factor in competitiveness when seeking federal funding. Traditionally, when a project seeks federal funding, it is for the last amount of funding to complete the project. Additionally, the farther along a project is, the less risk of project failure. For large projects, clearing the environmental phase means that the project has minimized most of the risk of failure. For smaller projects, this can be less important and, in some instances, they can be exempt from environmental review. Because of this, staff is looking for projects over \$10 million to have completed their environmental phase or for that phase to be completed prior to the grant submission. Projects under \$10 million will not have this requirement.

Projects Submitted

AGENCY	PROJECT	GRANT PROGRAM
PCTPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interstate 80/Highway 65 Interchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• RAISE (2025 cycle)
EDCTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trip to Green Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PROTECT

STA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I Street Bridge Replacement Project • Regional Climate Pollution Reduction Grant • Grant Line Road Safety and Mobility Project • US50 Gold Line Corridor Enhancement Project • Dos Rios Light Rail Station Project • Safe Streets to Transit Implementation Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge Improvement Program • Climate Pollution Reduction Grant • RAISE • MEGA • RAISE • Safe Streets for All
SacRT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Riverfront Streetcar Project • Stockton Blvd BRT Project • Zero-Emission Bus Maintenance Facility • LRT Vehicle Replacement Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAISE • Small Starts CIG • Lo-No • FTA (unstated program)
Elk Grove	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kammerer Road Extension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAISE
Yolo County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Road 98 Safety Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural

Staff coordinated with our local agency partners to identify their priority projects and what projects meet these criteria. That coordination included working with Placer County Transportation Planning Agency (PCTPA) and El Dorado County Transportation Commission (EDCTC) staff, Sacramento Transportation Authority (STA), the staff Funding Round Working Group, and several one-on-one conversations with local agency staff. Several agencies indicated that they were not currently seeking federal funds or their projects were not currently ready to pursue federal funds but will be in the future, including Caltrans, City of Davis, Yolo Transportation District, Yuba County (and their agencies), and Sutter County (and their agencies).

PCTPA submitted one project for consideration, I-80/Highway 65 Interchange, their priority project for federal funding. PCTPA plans to seek federal funding through the RAISE program for this project in the 2025 cycle; because PCTPA is pursuing funding next year, staff has not included the project in this recommendation, but it will be considered in the next prioritization cycle. STA worked with the local agencies in Sacramento County to prioritize six projects for consideration, which were submitted to SACOG for consideration. Two other agencies within Sacramento County – Sacramento Regional Transit and the City of Elk Grove – submitted projects directly to SACOG staff. Attachment A shows the application of the project prioritization methodology to the submitted projects.

Proposed Prioritized Projects

Below is the proposed prioritized project list for federal funding programs for consideration and approval, which was generated after evaluating each project based on the methodology discussed above. Projects on this list will have a letter of support from SACOG, grant technical assistance, and additional advocacy (as needed). This first list will also serve as a near-term focused platform for advocacy opportunities for SACOG and our regional partners, including the upcoming Capitol to Capitol trip organized by the Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce in April. It is envisioned that the material for the Capitol to Capitol trip will include these projects, as well as the region’s Mega-Region priority projects.

Several agencies submitted projects seeking funding from the current round of the RAISE program. The project that was selected for prioritization for the RAISE program was the Grant Line Road Safety and Mobility Project. The project that is being submitted is to reconstruct the two-lane roadway and construct a class I bike facility along Grant Line Road between Chrysanthy Blvd and White Rock Road. This project is strictly focused on addressing the persistent safety and state of good repair issues with this section of Grant Line Road, and is a partnership between the County of Sacramento, City of Rancho Cordova, Sacramento Transportation Authority (STA) and Capitol Southeast Connector JPA. The project has secured

funding from local partners for the design, and the RAISE request is for the construction funding.

Project Category	Project	Implementing Agency	Funding Program	County
Bridge	I Street Bridge Replacement Project	Sacramento, West Sacramento	Bridge Improvement Program	Sacramento, Yolo
Rural	Road 98 Safety Project	Yolo County	Rural	Yolo
Road	Grant Line Road Safety and Mobility Project	Capitol Southeast Connector JPA	RAISE	Sacramento
Resiliency/Adaptation	Trip to Green Infrastructure	EDCTC	PROTECT	El Dorado
Transit	Stockton Blvd BRT	City of Sacramento, Sacramento County, Sacramento Regional Transit	Small Starts CIG	Sacramento
Carbon Reduction	SMAQMD CPRG	SMAQMD	Climate Pollution Reduction Grant	Sacramento, Yolo, Sutter, Yuba, Placer, El Dorado, Nevada

This strategy is the beginning of a growing strategy to prioritize projects for funding opportunities. Staff expects to return to the board to make amendments to the methodology and prioritized list later in the year in advance of the State Senate Bill 1 competitive funding programs, as well as to further build out the federal programs that may not have been included in the first iteration.

Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

There is no fiscal impact with this item. Staff time is accounted for within the Overall Work Program (OWP) and adopted budget.