



Authorize Submittal of Proposed Strategic Partnership Planning Grant for Capital Area Regional Tolling Authority's Tolling Equity Study

Consent

**Author:** Kathleen Hanley

**Attachments:** Yes

**Referring Committee:** Transportation

**Issue:**

The Capital Area Regional Tolling Authority (CARTA) is seeking a Caltrans Strategic Partnerships planning grant for a Tolling Equity Study.

**Request:**

Approve

**Recommendation for Board:**

The Transportation Committee unanimously recommended that the board authorize the Executive Director to submit a Strategic Partnerships grant application for CARTA's Tolling Equity Study.

**Recommendation for Committee:**

That the Transportation Committee recommend that the board authorize the Executive Director to submit a Strategic Partnerships grant application for CARTA's Tolling Equity Study.

**Background:**

Caltrans administers the Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant program, an annual statewide discretionary transportation planning grant program to further their mission of providing a safe, sustainable, integrated, and efficient transportation system to enhance California's economy and livability. One of the grants in this program, the Strategic Partnerships grant, funds planning studies that address the regional, interregional, and statewide needs of the State highway system. Applications to the Strategic Partnerships grant must be submitted by a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) or Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), but can be "passed through" to other public agencies. SACOG—as the region's MPO—has applied for, won, and administered "pass through" Strategic Partnership grants previously. Applications for this year's program are due to Caltrans on January 22, 2025.

CARTA's focus for the next four years is to prepare to collect tolls when the Yolo 80 Corridor Improvements Project finishes construction. Developing a regional toll equity program is a key component of this preparation. The toll equity program will improve outcomes for under-resourced, under-represented, and disproportionately affected communities.

**Discussion/Analysis:**

A successful regional toll equity program requires thorough analysis, data-driven recommendations, stakeholder coordination, and community engagement. The proposed CARTA Tolling Equity Study will fill this urgent planning need for the region. At a high level, the CARTA Tolling Equity Study will:

- Understand how low-income residents use our existing highway system and how planned toll lanes will affect their travel
- Review the tolling equity studies and programs from other regions
- Analyze how different toll prices affect low-income residents' access to jobs and other key destinations
- Forecast how much toll discounts or credits for low-income residents might cost as the region's toll lane network expands
- Outline best practices for transparency, accountability, and community engagement to ensure CARTA's policies and decision-making are accessible
- Develop a flexible framework for toll equity that can be implemented for Yolo 80 in the near term, and on other corridors as the region's toll lane network expands
- Identify which toll equity program elements are best kept consistent across the region and which should be tailored for each corridor

The scope of the CARTA Tolling Equity Study and subsequent grant application are at the discretion of the CARTA board and are being developed by CARTA staff in partnership with staff from SACOG, YoloTD, Caltrans District 3, Placer County Transportation Planning Agency, and El Dorado County Transportation Commission. A draft scope (Attachment A) is included with this item. This scope is aligned with the objectives of the Strategic Partnerships grant program, the Blueprint Triple Bottom Line, and SACOG's Strategic Plan. This scope also aligns with the Advanced Planning work Yolo Transportation District (YoloTD) leads for the Yolo 80 project.

While the application and study would be led by CARTA, SACOG, as the MPO, must submit the Strategic Partnership grant application. Staff recommend that the board authorize the Executive Director to submit a Strategic Partnership grant application for the CARTA Tolling Equity Study.

**Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:**

If CARTA is successful in its grant application, SACOG staff time associated with passing through the funds will need to be included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026. Overall Work Program (OWP) and budget. There is no impact on the adopted FY 2024-2025 OWP or Budget.

**List of Attachments:**

Attachment A: Draft Tolling Equity Study Scope of Work