

## Summary of April Workshops on the 2020 Funding Round Policy Framework

The purpose of the workshops held during the week of April 20 was to gather additional input from stakeholders on the 2020 Funding Round. Representatives from nearly all member agencies in the four-county region, along with many other project sponsors participated. Feedback was gathered from public works departments, Caltrans, and special districts including transit and air quality management agencies.

The workshops focused on three areas: investment priorities, project identification, and project selection. The following section summarizes some key points of input from workshop participants. There was no consensus around the three themes, not surprising given the diversity of agencies and interests represented in the three sessions, but several areas of common ground stood out.

### Workshop takeaways

#### *State of Good Repair remains a pressing regional priority*

Participants across all four counties consistently stressed state of good repair as one of the most important funding priorities, reaffirming such focus in the MTP/SCS. The breakout groups generally had strong interest exploring if a potential regional stimulus could address the serious existing maintenance backlog across the region and support other system modernization improvements, though some expressed concern that such a program may be too small to have significant impact.

#### *Interest in greater certainty and guaranteed funding*

Stakeholders from multiple agencies stressed the desire for more certainty in funding awards as their primary issue of the funding round. Public works agencies in Sacramento County most strongly expressed this view, noting they wanted greater certainty in what funding was coming several years into the future to better manage local capital improvement programs. A competitive program by nature cannot provide multi-cycle certainty, so proponents of this argument have suggested the board instead move toward guaranteed or formula funding. Several of the breakout groups discussed different ways they thought guaranteed funding could work.

#### *Uncertainty stemming from COVID-19*

Across each county, participants expressed concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on their ability to deliver projects. Major concerns include a reduction in local revenues used as match on projects, as well as pressure on staff time for application development.

*Prior streamlining benefits have helped*

Of the steps SACOG has taken over the past two funding cycles, participants highlighted improvements to the application itself as most helpful. In particular, many workshop participants found applications from the 2019 round to be streamlined, shorter, and simpler, which helped agencies with limited resources. Staff pointed out that shortening applications and streamlining the selection process needs to be balanced with enough documentation and deliberation time to effectively evaluate projects for awards.

*Other needs from funding round*

While the desire for greater certainty was a common theme in many breakout sessions, participants across the four counties also shared other needs from the funding program, such as fully funding large projects in the community. Participants also had differences in opinions about the role of match (with more stakeholders in Yolo county suggesting local match should play a greater role in project evaluation), the size of awards (with agencies in Yuba and Sutter counties stressing the need for small and medium-sized awards), and if the funding round should encourage more partnerships in application proposals (with stakeholders in Sacramento county expressing more value in such coordination relative to the responses in the other three counties).