SACOG

Project Performance Assessment Update

Information
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Attachments: No

1. Issue:
SACOG has completed updates to its Project Performance Assessment tool and is now seeking comments through an open beta phase.

2. Recommendation:
None. This item is for discussion purposes only.

3. Background/Analysis:
SACOG staff continues to enhance tools and methods that analyze transportation investments at the project-level. This is in response to board direction and input, as well as federal and state policies that reward performance-based transportation planning and programming. The process builds from SACOG's strengths in performance evaluation at the regional (or system-wide) level with further capacity to assess the performance benefits of individual transportation projects.

The Project Performance Assessment (PPA) tool is a major component of SACOG's practice to provide quantitative indicators and other information that help inform regional decision making. The tool draws on multiple data sources to give a consistent and transparent baseline to measure performance for different transportation projects across the region, is online and open for any to use, and has been used as part of the 2018 and 2019 funding rounds to both streamline the data component for applicants as well as improve transparency in performance-based programming. The tool supports the agency's reputation in performance-based planning, as evidenced by the recent national Zephyr award for technical innovation and transparency in support of transportation decision making.

In the next months the board will be weighing different policy approaches to the 2020 agency funding round. Regardless of what policy direction the board chooses, staff believes it a useful time to brief the committee on the recently completed updates to the project performance tool.

4. Discussion/Analysis:
Since its rollout in the 2018 funding round SACOG staff conducted a self-assessment of the first iteration of the PPA tool. The review also incorporated valuable comments provided by project sponsors and other users. Drawing on these dual inputs staff has completed a series of improvements to the tool. Major enhancements include updated data (including expanded observed congestion and reliability measures that come from 'big

data' sources such as cell phones) and more nuanced treatment of performance indicators by facility capacity class. The bullets below list the main improvements completed as part of this update:

- More visualization of data upfront that allows project sponsors to explore different data layers prior to running the tool
- Augmented observed data, including congestion, reliability, safety, and land use
- Improvements to project buffer approach and indicators based on project type (especially freeway, arterial and complete streets)
- Expanded number of place types, allowing for fuller comparisons to projects in similar contexts (e.g., rural main street projects compared to other rural main street projects, suburban corridors compared to other suburban corridors, etc.)
- Optional ability to test pilot functionality, such as observed data on project travel sheds or how travel times change to jobs or other amenities
- Improvements to the online tool stability, continuing the ability of anyone with an internet browser to run the tool and see the data results
- Limited number of indicators by performance outcome to keep with theme of streamlining. The option for SACOG to run the tool, further limiting the time to complete an application.

Project sponsors also expressed the desire for the tool to provide better information on how more regionally-serving projects relate to parallel facilities. Staff is updating the tool documentation to provide clearer guidance on how the tool's existing functionality can report on parallel facilities but to also reiterate the limitations of the tool. Notably, the tool is not a benefit/cost analysis that conducts separate model runs. Instead, the Project Performance Assessment tool aims to strike a balance of coverage (applicable to a wide variety of projects), user access (a tool that runs in a reasonable amount of time and without specialized licensing) and reportability (a transparent tool that produces specific performance indicators on individual transportation projects). Staff believes the recently completed updates help advance all three goals.

The board, project sponsors and any other interested users can access the new beta tool at https://www.sacog.org/project-performance-assessment. The beta period will close on May 1, 2020.

5. Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:
The agency's adopted work program includes SACOG staff time and a minor consultant budget for project performance assessment tool development.

6. This staff report aligns with the following SACOG Work Plan Objectives:
Goal 1 : Advance Economic Prosperity
> **Objective 1**: Invest in and protect the transportation infrastructure needed to implement the region's economic prosperity plan.

Goal 2 : Connected Communities
> **Objective 3**: Prioritize cost-effective transportation investments that enhance mobility while improving safety, air quality, and the condition of transportation infrastructure and assets.

Goal 3 : Vibrant Places
> **Objective 1**: Develop tools and funding to help revitalize older commercial and retail corridors throughout the region.