



Transportation Committee

Meeting Date: March 5, 2020

Agenda Item No. 12

Draft 2021 Regional Active Transportation Program Policy Framework

Information

Prepared by: Victoria Cacciatore

Approved by: Matt Carpenter

Attachments: Yes

1. Issue:

Staff developed a six-county regional policy framework to outline how SACOG will competitively distribute \$11,771,000 of Active Transportation Program (ATP) funding to increase biking and walking. The California Transportation Commission will adopt or reject our final policy framework at their May 13, 2020, meeting.

2. Recommendation:

Staff requests input on the draft evaluation criteria and process to distribute Regional Active Transportation Program funds. The final policy framework will be presented to the board in April for approval.

3. Background/Analysis:

The Active Transportation Program was created by Senate Bill 99 in 2013, with the first competitive program in 2014. The ATP combines several smaller active transportation funding sources into one larger program with broader eligibilities. The primary goal of the ATP is to increase use of active modes. The ATP is a highly competitive program jointly managed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the California Transportation Commission (CTC). ATP funds are distributed competitively across the state through three programs: a statewide program distributes 50 percent of the funds; a small urban/rural program operated by Caltrans distributes 10 percent of the funds; and the final 40 percent of funds are distributed by metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in urban areas with populations greater than 200,000. A minimum of 25 percent of ATP funds must benefit disadvantaged communities.

The ATP has a sequential selection process split between a statewide competition followed by regional competitions, like the SACOG Regional ATP in El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba counties. During the first selection process, the CTC develops a list of projects recommended for funding in the statewide ATP based on score, eligibility, and deliverability. Projects that are unsuccessful in the statewide ATP are then eligible to compete for funding in the Regional ATP, allowing for a second opportunity to compete for funding. The sequential selection process is important because it allows local agencies to bring more funding into our region to implement needed active transportation projects and offers streamlining opportunities for funding programs with similar emphases. Staff works with El Dorado County Transportation Commission and Placer County Transportation Planning Agency to develop and implement the Regional ATP.

The draft funding estimate for the State and Regional ATP identifies \$221,780,000 for the statewide competition and \$11,771,000 for the regional competition. The statewide and regional programs have funds

available across four years: state fiscal years 2021-2022, 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025. The final fund estimate for the statewide and regional competitions will be adopted at the March 25, CTC meeting.

4. Discussion/Analysis:

CTC staff launched development of the 2021 ATP Guidelines last November. The 2021 ATP Guidelines are expected to be finalized and adopted at the March 25, CTC meeting. Through feedback gathered from regions, local agencies, advocacy groups, and other interested stakeholders, CTC staff is proposing minimal changes and refinements to how the statewide ATP competition is conducted. The draft 2021 ATP Guidelines include some notable changes from the last ATP cycle: identifying how ATP investments align transportation spending, programming, and mitigation with the state's climate goals; establishing a quick-build pilot program that may award up to \$5,000,000 to interim capital projects; requiring performance metric reporting for awarded projects; and removing the requirement of applying to the statewide ATP in order to compete in a regional ATP competition. The statewide ATP call for projects will be released by March 26, with applications due to CTC staff by June 15.

Staff will continue to provide technical assistance to agencies in our region applying for statewide ATP grants. Technical assistance typically includes data to strengthen the discussion of project benefits, project scoping assistance, draft application review, and (Caltrans resources permitting) coordinated review with Caltrans District 3 Local Assistance focused on project deliverability and related concerns.

2021 Regional ATP Evaluation Criteria and Process

The statewide ATP Guidelines place restrictions on how regions can distribute funds, but MPOs can submit specific changes to the CTC for approval to use in regional processes. CTC identified the areas an MPO can propose changes to when implementing a regional program—scoring criteria and weighting, minimum project sizes, match requirements, definitions of disadvantaged communities, and using a supplement call for projects and applications. Staff proposes continuing to use all available options to adapt the ATP to our regional needs, outlined in the policy framework (Attachment A).

After the 2019 Regional ATP, staff reached out to project sponsors and the active transportation working group to gather feedback on the application, tools, and outcomes of the regional process and application. We used this feedback to refine the ATP policy framework and application materials. The Draft 2021 Regional ATP Policy Framework establishes a competitive funding program that heavily emphasizes how the investment will increase biking and walking by building safe, comfortable active transportation networks that connect people to desirable destinations. The Regional ATP also evaluates how each project supports regional priorities of supporting economic prosperity strategies and balancing cost effectiveness with project performance. To best consider how the investments benefit our region's disadvantaged residents, the Regional ATP would formalize use of the 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) definition of Environmental Justice Areas (Attachment B).

The Regional ATP policy framework also looks toward how we can fulfill ATP and state-identified goals to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets. This evaluation criterion has the potential to more closely align with the larger Green Means Go effort, the multi-year pilot program to lower greenhouse gas emissions in the six-county Sacramento region by accelerating infill development, reducing vehicle trips, and electrifying remaining trips.

Unlike other funds managed by SACOG, Regional ATP project savings and projects that lose their funding are not returned to SACOG for later programming in the six counties. Regional ATP evaluation criteria and process

emphasize the importance of keeping funds in our region by including criteria about project deliverability and past grant performance, and by including local project engineers in the evaluation process. To date, no Regional ATP funds have been lost due to a project not being able to complete the improvements outlined in their original ATP application.

The schedule proposed by the CTC limits the amount of usable time to evaluate Regional ATP projects (Attachment C). To balance application streamlining with a thorough evaluation of projects, staff proposes using a single application for all competing Regional ATP projects that will effectively use information developed for the statewide ATP application. Project evaluation is proposed to continue to draw on partners with expertise in planning, engineering, and other areas related to ATP goals.

Attachment A: Draft 2021 Regional Active Transportation Program Policy Framework

Attachment B: MTP/SCS 2020 Environmental Justice Areas Map

Attachment C: Statewide and Regional ATP Calendar

5. Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

This item has no fiscal impact to the agency's operating budget, other than already budgeted staff time.

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.

Objective 3: Improve people's ability to get to jobs, schools, and other economic opportunities.

Goal 2 : Connected Communities

Objective 1: Develop more sustainable sources of future transportation funding while winning new competitive state and federal transportation grants.

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