



AGENDA ITEM #6

REGIONAL VISION • COOPERATION • INFORMATION

MEMBERS:

- City of Lacey
- City of Olympia
- City of Rainier
- City of Tenino
- City of Tumwater
- City of Yelm
- Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation
- Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Town of Bucoda
- Thurston County
- North Thurston Public Schools
- Olympia School District
- Tumwater School District
- Intercity Transit
- LOTT Clean Water Alliance
- Port of Olympia
- PUD No. 1 of Thurston County

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

- Lacey Fire District #3
- Puget Sound Regional Council
- The Evergreen State College
- Thurston Conservation District
- Thurston Economic Development Council
- Timberland Regional Library

MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Policy Board

FROM: Veena Tabbutt, Deputy Director
Karen Parkhurst, Planning and Policy Director
Paul Brewster, Senior Planner

DATE: April 7, 2021

SUBJECT: Call for Projects Update

PURPOSE

To provide staff feedback on the draft Federal Funding Call for Projects process update.

Summary:

- Staff have developed a proposed structure for TRPC’s Federal Funding Call for Projects process update
- The goal is to:
 - Provide a more direct tie to performance goals and targets.
 - Provide clear and transparent project eligibility and evaluation criteria.
 - Continue to position the region to meet obligation targets and be eligible for redistributed funding.
- The proposed program would consist of three tiers:
 - Project Priorities: to help identify eligible or priority types of projects.
 - Regional Priorities: an overlay to assess all projects on their likelihood to advance regional goals.
 - Set asides and funding minimums/caps: to help distribute funding in a way that would smooth out differences in staff resources to develop plans or grant applications, or inherent differences in types of projects and their ability to advance regional goals.
- The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) reviewed the proposed structure in March 2021 and gave staff the go ahead to proceed to the Transportation Policy Board (TPB).



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REQUESTED ACTION

Feedback to staff is requested.

vt:bl

Attachment

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

1. What are the equity impacts of this particular decision?
 - The proposed structure includes equity as a Regional Priority.
2. Who will benefit from or be burdened by the particular decision?
 - Disadvantaged populations are likely to benefit from the inclusion of equity as a Regional Priority in the Call for Projects process update.
3. Are there strategies to mitigate the unintended consequences?
 - N/A

BACKGROUND

Staff have been testing questions and reviewing other Call for Projects processes over the last few years. This marks the first step in outlining a specific program structure for TRPC's Federal Funding Call for Projects process. Please see the attachment for details.

Thurston Regional Planning Council

CALL FOR PROJECTS UPDATE PROCESS PROPOSED PROGRAM STRUCTURE

March 2021

PURPOSE:

Update the process for TRPC's federal funding allocation process "Call for Projects" for Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG – formerly STP) and STBG Set Aside (formerly TAP) funding¹ to:

- Provide a more direct tie to performance goals and targets
- Provide clear and transparent project eligibility and evaluation criteria
- Continue to position the region to meet obligation targets and be eligible for redistributed funding

WHAT CAN'T CHANGE: FEDERAL GUIDELINES:

- Require urban, rural, and flexible (either urban or rural) funding allocations
- Set forth overall project eligibility

WHAT WE RECOMMEND DOESN'T CHANGE:

- Continue to program out 4 years of funding each cycle
- Identify set-asides up front
- Continue to maintain a contingency list in the event the region receives redistributed funding or a funded project is unable to move forward

PROGRAM STRUCTURE:

The proposed program would consist of three tiers:

- Project Priorities: to help identify eligible or priority types of projects.
- Regional Priorities: an overlay to assess all projects on their likelihood to advance regional goals.
- Set-asides and funding minimums/caps: to help distribute funding in a way that would smooth out differences in staff resources to develop plans or grant applications, or inherent differences in types of projects and their ability to advance regional goals.

Project Priorities

The region has always set project priorities that determine project eligibility, within the broader federal eligibility criteria. This update recommends adding two new Project Priorities and tying either project eligibility or ranking more directly to performance goals or local and/or regional priorities or plans.

For instance, similar to the State's safety program (Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)), safety projects could be limited to those included in a local Safety Plan or could receive higher ranking if included in a local Safety Plan. Active Transportation projects could be focused on priorities (once established.) ***Details would be determined in a collaborative way over the coming months.***

¹ Note: Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds will continue to be awarded to projects that reduce emissions of particulate matter 10.

This will evolve over time as new plans are developed. For example:

- Rural Mobility Strategy will lead to rural efficiency project identification
- Regional Trails Plan will lead to trail project identification

Policy makers could develop set-asides for specific Project Priorities each funding cycle, to develop focus areas.

Recommended Project Priorities:

| Project Priority | Existing or New | Rationale |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--|
| Safety | Existing | |
| Efficiency | Existing | |
| Maintenance | Existing | |
| Resiliency | New | Lots of effort in the region around hazard and resiliency planning (i.e., hazard mitigation and climate adaptation) |
| Active Transportation | New | Active transportation projects have always been eligible, but making them an explicit priority highlights their importance to the region |

Regional Priorities

Regional Priorities are tied to new or existing regional goals. Staff will work with the Technical Advisory Committee to identify types of projects that best meet identified goals. For instance, different types of projects can be categorized based on their effect on either greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – either through reducing idling (delay) or vehicle miles traveled (distance).

Applying Regional Priority ranking will give policy makers transparent criteria for project evaluation, regardless of the type of project.

Recommended Regional Priorities:

| Regional Priority | Existing or To Be Defined | Rationale |
|--|--|--|
| Efficient use of Federal Funds and Readiness to Obligate | To be defined | Will help ensure we meet our annual obligation target and use federal funding efficiently. Priority of Technical Advisory Committee. |
| Sustainable Thurston Land Use Goal | Adopted in 2013 | Major regional planning project resulted in priority goals and targets |
| Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Goal. | GHG goal adopted in 2013 and updated in 2021 | Recently updated the GHG goal and many local jurisdictions adopted a Regional Climate Plan |
| Equity Goal | Being defined currently | Priority of Council |

Set Asides, Funding Minimums, or Funding Caps:

In addition to the required urban/rural allocations, policy makers can develop set-asides for rural communities (Tenino, Rainier, Bucoda, Nisqually Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation) or non-traditional partners such as school districts.

Policy makers can set Funding Caps, so that jurisdictions with greater resources for project identification and grant writing don't receive the majority of funding. Alternatively, they could set minimums for traditional partners (Cities, County, Intercity Transit) to ensure a geographic distribution of funding.

They could also set funding caps on types of projects. For instance, they may want to limit the amount of planning projects, or construction projects, just to ensure a wide range of types of projects to help meet obligation targets.

Project Outreach, Input, and Decision Making:

Public Outreach: TRPC is developing a community survey that will ask questions on project priorities, regional priorities, and access to transportation to meet daily needs. The survey will also include demographic questions so that respondents' answers can be correlated to various demographic characteristics. TRPC will distribute the survey by sending postcards to every resident in Thurston County, with follow up efforts to reach those who do not traditionally participate in planning projects. We will provide a Spanish version of the survey and will translate into other languages upon request. This survey will give the TAC and TPB insight into public priorities.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC): The TAC, consisting of staff from local and state partners, will help develop the process and give input on each step.

Transportation Policy Board (TPB): The TPB will be asked to make policy recommendations throughout the process, after being briefed with TAC input and any relevant information from public outreach.

Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC): TRPC will make the final decisions on the program structure.