



MEMORANDUM

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Matt Ransom, Executive Director 
DATE: March 27, 2018
SUBJECT: **RTC Regional Competitive Grant Program Review**

AT A GLANCE – INFORMATION

Over the past five months, staffs from local agencies have been meeting to review and recommend changes to the RTC Regional Competitive Grant Program. The purpose of this memorandum is to present proposed changes and seek feedback from the RTC Board. Staff will return to the RTC Board in May to request adoption of changes to the grant program.

BACKGROUND

Through Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), federal funds are allocated to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) such as RTC for selecting projects that implement the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). RTC receives funds from the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), and Transportation Alternatives (TA) programs.

Since the need for transportation investment exceeds the available revenue, a competitive grant process as required by federal regulations is conducted to select priority projects. The competitive grant process includes strategies to guide the selection of projects.

To ensure that the regional grant process meets the needs of the region, the process is normally reviewed by staff from member agencies on an annual basis. Between November 2017 and March 2018 a sub-committee of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) has been meeting to review the regional grant process. The recommendations of the sub-committee were reviewed by the full RTAC committee at their March 16, 2018 meeting.

RTAC is recommending that the overall regional grant process remains the same, with some changes to the regional policies and regional selection criteria. RTAC is seeking further policy clarification for how to apply the preservation exclusion strategy to grant proposals for bus replacement.

REGIONAL COMPETITIVE GRANT PROCESS

The overall regional grant process includes the following steps:

1. Projects are screened to determine eligibility and consistency with regional plans.
2. Projects are evaluated by regionally adopted selection criteria.
3. Based on project evaluation, projects are selected for funding.

RTC SELECTION CRITERIA

The RTC selection criteria are multimodal and address project funding across federal funding categories. The criteria reflects the system performance goals and measures from the Regional Transportation Plan. The wider range of criteria includes mobility, multimodal/operations, safety, economic development, financial/implementation, and sustainability/air quality.

The draft selection criteria are attached with proposed changes highlighted in red text. Most of the proposed changes reflect enhancement for transit or were minor point changes. The draft criteria were reviewed against 2017 project applications; with a finding that the changes had small impact on scores and did not significantly change rank order. The following changes to the selection criteria are being considered:

1. Overall: Minor modification of points for selected criteria.
2. Mobility: Provide additional points for transit based on level of expansion.
3. Mobility: Replace 20 Year Model with Regional System designation.
4. Multimodal: Remove Access Management (Duplicative to Safety-Access Mgt.).
5. Safety: Add additional safety categories for transit.
6. Economic Development: Move Truck Route from Mobility to Economic Development.
7. Financial: Modify previous completed work criteria.
8. Sustainability: Add transit related sustainability measures

TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMMING GUIDEBOOK

The Transportation Programming Guidebook provides member agencies background information, policies, and procedures for the regional grant process and the development of the region's Transportation Improvement Program.

A draft Guidebook that highlights the recommended changes with red text and yellow highlight is attached. Most of the changes were minor and are fully supported by full RTAC committee. The one exception is the clarifying language on the preservation strategy, which is still in development.

Preservation Policy Context

In 2016 when the Guidebook was approved, RTAC and the RTC Board had substantial discussion on how to make the best use of limited federal funds. One of the strategies included restricting the use of RTC grant funds for activities where the primary outcome is "preservation" of the transportation system. The RTC Board stipulated that local agencies have the primary responsibility for preserving (maintaining) the transportation system and federal funds should be used for improving the regional transportation system.

YR 2018 Subcommittee Review

In order to apply the strategies consistently, the RTAC subcommittee took up review of this policy in relation to replacement bus purchases. To be consistent with RTC Board adopted strategies, the recommendation from the RTAC subcommittee clarified the strategy with draft language, restricting grant proposals for transit replacement buses (where the primary outcome is

asset maintenance, not improvement). After substantial discussion on this issue and in an effort to provide defined criteria, the subcommittee recommended that grant applications for bus purchases must provide any of the following: new service, expands transit seat capacity, or provide an air quality benefit. Meeting any of those criteria would qualify a grant proposal to be eligible within the regional grant program, as the outcome would be regional system improvement versus system preservation.

The proposed strategy language can be found on page 8 and 9 of the Guidebook. RTAC reviewed the Guidebook proposals at their March meeting, and are seeking additional input and Board comments on how the preservation exclusion strategy may apply to future bus replacement grant applications.

The following changes to the Transportation Programming Guidebook are being considered:

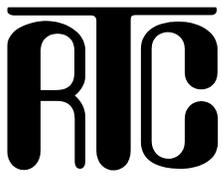
1. Guidebook - Update grant names (STBG/TA) and other clarifying language.
2. Page 8-9 – Provide clarifying language on Preservation as it relates to bus purchase.
3. Page 11 – Provide clarifying language that local agencies may need to proceed using local funds (Advance Construction).
4. Page 16 – Require conduit in all projects that open a roadway using regional federal funds.
5. Page 18 – Change deadline for Before and After Studies.
6. Page 21 – Policy for which project would receive programming authority if a project is delayed.

CONCLUSION

At the April RTC Board meeting staff is seeking feedback on proposed changes to the RTC Regional Competitive Grant Program, including policy input on bus replacement as it applies to the preservation exclusion strategy.

The RTC Board feedback will be taken to the April RTAC meeting to develop a final set of recommendations for the RTC Board. In May, the RTC Board will be requested to adopt changes to the RTC Regional Competitive Grant Program and issue a call for year 2022 projects.

Attachment: RTC Selection Criteria
Transportation Programming Guidebook



RTC Selection Criteria

Transportation Improvement Program

Project Screening Criteria

1. Is the project consistent with Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Local Comprehensive Plans, and Congestion Management Process? (*Road and transit projects that add capacity must be listed in the RTP*)
2. If a road project, is the facility federally classified as an urban collector/rural minor arterial or above?
3. Is the project an improvement project, rather than a maintenance project?
4. Does the request for STP/CMAQ funds exceed the regional cost limitation of \$4,000,000 per mile?
5. Is the project ready to proceed and has a reasonable timeline for implementation?
6. If an operational improvement, does the project follow TSMO guidance?

Summary of Needs Criteria

<u>Evaluation Criteria</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Mobility	20
Multimodal/Operations	15
Safety	20
Economic Development	20
Financial/Implementation	15
Sustainability/Air Quality	<u>10</u>
	100

Mobility 20 Maximum

Existing Peak Hour Condition	0-10
• V/C Ratio 0.9 or greater/Less than 60% of Posted Speed	10
• V/C Ratio 0.8 to 0.89/60-64% of Posted Speed	7
• V/C Ratio 0.7 to 0.79/65-69% of Posted Speed	5
• V/C Ratio 0.5 to 0.69/70-74% of Posted Speed	3
• Transit (based on level of transit expansion)	6-8
Regional System	0-2
• Project is located on the RTC designated regional system	2
RTP 20-Year Model	0-2
• V/C Ratio Reduced 0.1	2
• V/C Ratio Reduced 0.05	1
• Modeled Speed Improvement	1-4
Congestion Management Process	0-6
• On CMP Network	2
• Project Addresses CMP Concern	0-4
Network Development	0-6
• Extends Improvements	1-3
• Completes Gap	3-4
• Completes Corridor	5-6
• New Network Connection	2-6
• Improves Parallel Corridor	0-3

Benefit Weighted by Existing Peak Hour Volume	0-5
• 1,501+ Vehicles	5
• 901-1,500 Vehicles	3
• 500-899	1

Multimodal/Operations **15 Maximum**

Operational Improvements	0-8
• Signal integration/upgrade	2
• Data Collection (Volume, speed, occupancy, classification)	2
• Traffic Surveillance	2
• Communication Infrastructure (conduit, fiber, switches, etc.)	1-3
• Variable message signage	2
• Traveler Information	2
• Access Management	2
• Smart Transit Management/Transit Signal Priority	2

Multimodal	0-10
• Transit Expansion	1-8
• Peak Hour Transit Buses (1 point per 2 Buses)	0-5
• Transit Replacement	0-3
• Exclusive Transit Lanes (Transit Only, BAT Lanes, etc.)	2-8
• Transit Amenities (Shelter, Platform, etc.)	0-2
• Park and Ride Construction	5-8
• Carpool/Vanpool	1-3
• Improve Non-Motorized Access to Park and Ride/Transit	1-2
• Extends or Completes gap in Bicycle or Pedestrian Route	1-3
• Construct 10-foot separated path or two 5-foot striped bicycle lanes	2
• Sidewalks (Both Sides)	1-2
• Sidewalks wider than 5' and/or Planter Strip (3' minimum)	1-3
• Improves Transit Speed/Reliability	1-3
• Transportation Demand Management	1-3
• Contact C-TRAN's Capital Project Manager (10+ days)	1
• Adopted Complete Street Policy/ Ordinance	1-2

Safety **20 Maximum**

Correctable Collision History (3 year)	0-8
• Sliding Scale	0-8
Accident Rate	0-2
• Below Average, Average, or Above Average	0-2
Safety Strategies Implemented	0-10
• Public Transit Safety or Security	1-8
➤ Passenger Safety (Camera/Lighting/Visibility/Security Patrols)	
➤ Enhanced Pedestrian Access/Crossings near Stations	
➤ Improved Maintenance	
➤ Employee Safety (Collision/Drug Testing/Distracted Driving, etc.)	
• Pedestrian Safety	1-5
➤ Add sidewalk where one does not exist	
➤ ADA accessibility	
➤ Wider sidewalk	

- Buffer
- Improved Street Crossing (crosswalk/signal)
- Lighting
- Improve Access to Transit
- Target Zero Strategy
- Bicycle Safety 1-5
 - Add Striped Bicycle Lane
 - Add Separated Path
 - Buffer
 - Improves Access to Transit
 - Target Zero Strategy
- Improves Intersection 1-5
 - Provide Appropriate Traffic Control
 - Improves Visibility/Sight Distance
 - Improves Geometry/Approach
 - Address Collisions at Intersection Identified in Safety Management Assessment
 - Target Zero Strategy
- Improve Road Safety 1-5
 - Improve Clear Zone
 - Improve Geometry
 - Improve Visibility/Sight Distance
 - Add Rumble Strips, raised markers, barrier/guardrail
 - Target Zero Strategy

- Existing Conditions 0-6**
- Pavement Widths (Deviation from standards) 0-2
 - Shoulder Widths (1 pt. per 2 feet less than 6') 0-3
 - No Center Turn lane/Pocket (Project must correct) 1

- Provides Access Management 0-6**
- Add Non-Traversable Median greater than 50% of project length 3
 - Add C-Curb at Intersections or less than 50% of project length 2
 - Close Minor Intersections 1
 - Reduce Access Points 2-5
 - Eliminate Existing At-Grade Crossing 5

Economic Development 20 Maximum

- Employment Growth 0-12**
- Retail Employment Growth (Regional Model-Select Link) 0-5
 - Other Employment Growth (Regional Model-Select Link) 0-7

- Provide or Improves Access to Existing Employment and CTR Employers 0-8**
- Existing Employment (Regional Model-Select Link) 0-8

- Freight Generator 0-5**
- Improves Access 1-3
 - Creates Access 4-5

- Truck Route 0-5**
- T5-T1 1-5

- Private Development 1-5**
- Signed Development Agreements 1-3

- Private Investment in Public Infrastructure 1-3
- Environmental Justice 0-2**
- Bike, Pedestrian, Transit Enhancement to EJ block group 0-2

Financial/Implementation **15 Maximum**

Overmatch Funding 0-8

- 1 Point per 4% Above Minimum Match

Previously Completed Work (Prior to application deadline) 0-10

- ~~Environmental Permits Submitted/Approved 1-3~~
- ~~Plans, Specs, and Estimate Completed 3~~
- ~~Right of Way Acquisition Completed 3~~
- ~~No Sensitive Areas or Issues Pending 3~~
- Land purchase not needed or completed 3
- Stamped Engineer Estimate 3
- Direct Purchase 2
- Survey Completed 2
- Geotechnical Report Completed 2

~~**Full Funding In Place 4**~~

Sustainability/Air Quality **10 Maximum**

Air Quality Benefit 0-10

- TCM Tools (Reduction of CO and VOC) 0-10

Sustainability Measures 0-8

- LID or Enhanced Treatment Stormwater Control 2
- Hardscaping or Native Planting (no permanent irrigation) 1
- Correction of Fish Barrier 0-3
- Enhances Stream Bank Conditions 1
- Corrects Existing Sensitive Area Impacts 2
- Appropriate Reduction in Existing Pavement Width 0-2
- Replace or Install Low Energy Street Lighting 2
- Reuse/Recycling of Materials 2
- In-Place Pavement Reconstruction or Structural Retrofit 2
- ~~Transit – Reduced Emission 2~~
- ~~Transit - Reduced noise and vibration 2~~
- ~~Transit - Reduced per capita VMT 2~~
- ~~Transit – Creating Livable Communities 2~~

RTC Selection Criteria_20180208.doc